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ABSTRACT

Designed to help high school guidance counselors advise students about financial aid for postsecondary education, this handbook provides information on sources of aid from programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education. The guide is divided into three parts: (1) General Information about Postsecondary Opportunities; (2) The Application Process for Financial Aid; and (3) Filling Out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Part One advises the reader on sources of aid, general eligibility requirements for student aid, demonstration of need, and how to choose a school. Part Two discusses the federal role in application processing, how one should apply for aid, how to submit an initial application, how the application is processed, reviewing the Student Aid Report (SAR), making changes to the SAR, filing an application, and 1996-97 application deadlines. The last section offers detailed instructions on how the student should fill out aid applications with tips on outlining educational background, one's plans, student status, household information, income, the simplified needs test, asset information, releases and signatures. Also included is a special supplement targeted toward disadvantaged students that suggests ways to encourage high school students to consider postsecondary education as an avenue to a more rewarding career. Three appendices list further sources of information, state agencies in education, and a glossary of terms. (JBJ)

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Counselor's Handbook 1996-97

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High School Edition

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U.S. Department of Education
Student Financial Assistance Programs

CG027544

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Introduction

The primary purpose of the *Counselor's Handbook for High Schools 1996-97* is to help high school guidance counselors advise students about financial aid for postsecondary education. Specifically, this handbook provides information on sources of student aid from programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education.

We have also included supplementary materials that suggest ways to encourage high school students to consider postsecondary education as an avenue to a more rewarding career.

We welcome any comments or suggestions on ways to make this handbook more useful in future editions. Please send your comments to:

Development Section
USED/OPE/SFAP/PTAS/TPID
ROB-3, Room 3013
600 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

We hope you find this publication informative and helpful.

Part 1:

general information about postsecondary opportunities

Sources of aid

Many high school students are not aware that they may be eligible for financial aid to attend college. Unfortunately, many of the neediest students assume that they cannot afford to go to college to continue their education. Financial aid is available, though, often through federal student aid programs.

To help students find out more about the student aid programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education, be sure to give them copies of *Funding Your Education,* as well as any information offered by your state's higher education agency. *Funding Your Education* is a new Department of Education publication especially for high school students. The Department will be sending order forms for *Funding Your Education* to every high school in the United States in the fall. It may also be ordered by writing to the following address:

Federal Student Aid Information Center
P.O. Box 84
Washington, DC 20044

This handbook focuses on the student financial aid (SFA) programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education. These programs are authorized by the Higher Education Act of 1965 (referred to in this text as "the law"), as amended. For 1995-96, the SFA programs delivered more than **$28 billion** in aid to more than **6 million** students. This amount represents a substantial commitment by the Department to provide financial assistance for students at the postsecondary level. However, there are other important sources of aid that also may be available to your students. To encourage them to find out more about other sources of aid, tell your students to check the reference section of the school library or public library. You may want to suggest titles of books that you feel are particularly pertinent. **Appendix A** has some references you and your students might find helpful.

The Major Federal Student Aid Programs Administered by ED

The Department administers the following major financial aid programs to help students meet the costs of postsecondary education:

Federal Pell Grants

Campus-Based Programs

- **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants**
- **Federal Work-Study**
- **Federal Perkins Loans**

William D. Ford Federal Direct Loans

- **Federal Direct Stafford Loans**
- **Federal Direct PLUS Loans**

Federal Family Education Loans

- **Federal Stafford Loans**
- **Federal PLUS Loans**

It is customary to group these programs by type of aid: **grants** (Federal Pell and Federal SEOG) that do not have to be repaid, **loans** (Federal Perkins, Federal Direct Stafford, Federal Direct PLUS, Federal Stafford, and Federal PLUS) that enable students—and parents, in the case of Direct and Federal PLUS Loans—to borrow money to help meet education costs, and **work-study** (FWS) that provides part-time jobs.

But it is also useful to think about the programs in terms of how aid is awarded and delivered to a student. **Federal Pell Grants** are awarded through strict rules set by the Department. If a student is eligible on the basis of these rules, an eligible school will almost always be able to pay the student his or her Federal Pell Grant and will be reimbursed by the Department. In contrast, the Department allocates a specified amount of funds each year to each of the postsecondary schools that participate in the **campus-based programs**. The school then awards these funds to students following federal guidelines. Campus-based funds are limited, and many schools award them early. Therefore, the earlier an eligible student applies, the more likely he or she is to receive campus-based aid. An eligible student who applies after all campus-based aid has been expended will be unable to receive campus-based aid.

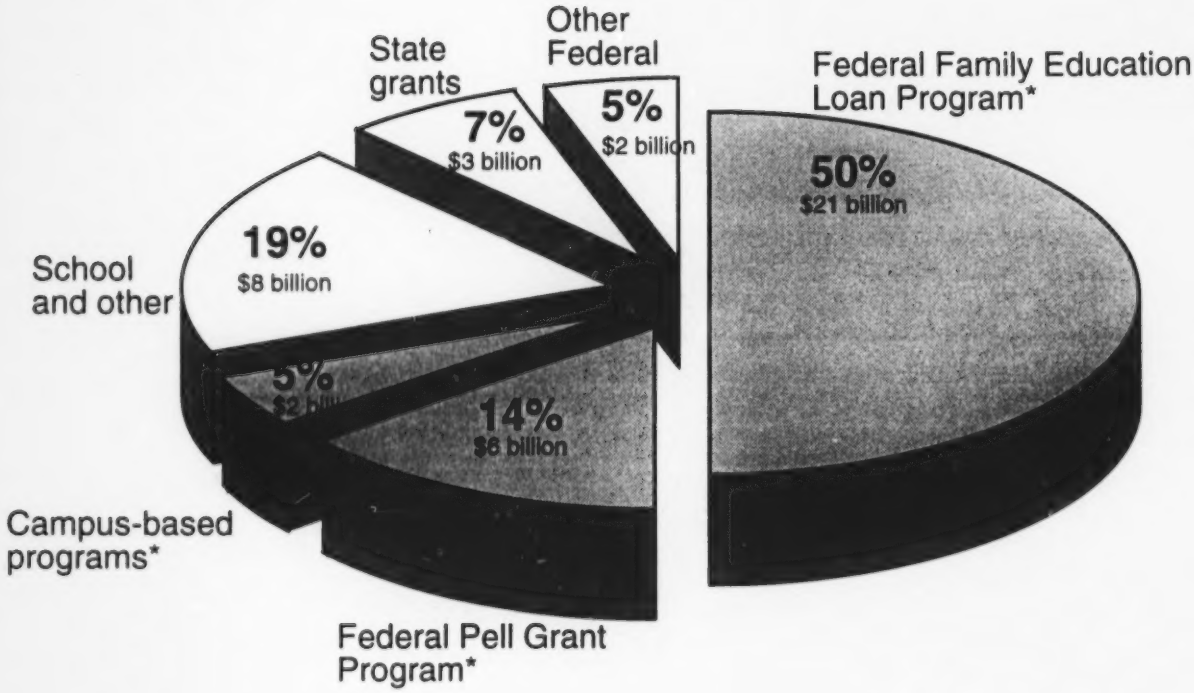
The **William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan (Direct Loan) Program** enables eligible students and parents to borrow from, and repay loans to, the Department instead of a bank or guaranty agency. Thus, student and parent borrowers work with a single entity, the U.S. Department of Education, through its Servicing Center. The Direct Loan Program offers a range of flexible repayment options to meet borrowers' varied financial circumstances. Funds lent under the Direct Loan Program are supplied by the federal government to schools that participate in this program. There are two types of Federal Direct Stafford Loans: Federal Direct Subsidized Loans and Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loans. Federal Direct Subsidized Loans are made to students who qualify on the basis of financial need and other factors. The federal government does not charge interest during some significant periods, such as when the student is in school, thereby subsidizing these loans for borrowers. Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loans are not made on the basis of financial need, and the government charges the borrower interest throughout the life of the loan. Federal Direct PLUS Loans are made to parents to pay the undergraduate education costs for their dependent students; these loans are also not need based and are not subsidized (interest is charged throughout the life of the loan).

The funds lent under the **Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program** are provided by banks and other lenders. The loans are reinsured by the federal government in the event the borrower dies or becomes totally and permanently disabled. Federal Stafford Loans can be subsidized or unsubsidized. Like Direct Subsidized Loans, subsidized Stafford Loans are made to all students who qualify on the basis of financial need and other factors. The federal government pays the interest on the loan when the student is in school and during other periods. Unsubsidized Stafford Loans are not based on need, and the student is responsible for paying all the interest on the loan. Federal PLUS Loans are available to parents of dependent undergraduate students. These loans are also not need based, and the borrower is responsible for paying all the interest on the loan.

Students and parents cannot borrow from both the FFEL Program and the Direct Loan Program at the same time. The school the eligible student plans to attend will tell students which program they can borrow from at that school.

See *Funding Your Education* for more information on the Department's major federal student aid programs.

sources of aid for 1993-94



Nearly 70% of the student aid awarded each year comes from the U.S. Department of Education programs.

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Other ED Programs

The State Student Incentive Grant (SSIG) Program assists states in providing grants to eligible students who attend postsecondary schools. Each state has its own name for this grant program, as well as its own award amounts and application procedures. Many of the eligibility criteria are established by the state agency administering the program, although SSIG recipients must also meet the same basic eligibility criteria that apply to other SFA program recipients. States may use a percentage of their SSIG funding to provide work-study assistance through community service job programs. Because of the variations in state programs, student and school inquiries about SSIG and other state grant, scholarship, and work-study assistance should be directed to the appropriate state agencies. These are listed in **Appendix B**.

The Department provides other types of student aid for disabled persons through programs that are administered by state vocational rehabilitation agencies. Students must meet state eligibility criteria for these programs, and this aid must be coordinated with student aid from other sources to prevent duplicating benefits. Students are most likely to receive the maximum assistance by contacting, as early as possible, the state agencies that administer the state programs for their home states and the financial aid offices at the schools they plan to attend.

Under the **Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Program (Byrd Program)**, to recognize and promote student excellence and achievement, the U.S. Secretary of Education makes grants to the states, providing scholarships to exceptionally able students for postsecondary study. Student recipients under this program are known as "Byrd Scholars." To apply for a Byrd Program scholarship, a student follows the application procedures established by the state educational agency (SEA) in the state in which the student resides. The SEA establishes procedures for selecting the scholars after consulting with school administrators, school boards, teachers, counselors, and parents. Byrd Scholars are awarded $1,500 each year (not to exceed the scholar's cost of attendance) for each of their first four years of study at any institution of higher education.

Other Federal Programs

A program of **National and Community Service** provides full-time education awards of up to $4,725 a year. Individuals may work before, during, or after their postsecondary education and can use the funds either to pay current or future education expenses or to repay federal student loans. Students must be high school graduates or have GEDs to participate in this

program. For more information, call **1-800-942-2677** or write to: The Corporation for National and Community Service, 1100 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20525.

The U.S. Department of Labor administers the **Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA)** through the states. Training funds vary from state to state. In most cases, the states provide tuition and fee assistance for job training and sometimes also provide a transportation allowance for students. For information on JTPA, students should contact their state employment agency.

The **U.S. Public Health Service** administers the **Nursing Student Loan Program** for undergraduate and graduate nursing students. This program is intended to assist students pursuing careers in nursing by providing long-term, low-interest loans to help meet the costs of education. In addition, the Public Health Service sponsors the **Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students Program**, which provides for scholarships for financially needy students enrolled in health professions and nursing programs. Students interested in these programs should contact the financial aid office of the school they plan to attend. The Public Health Service also sponsors a number of programs for graduate students in medicine. For more information on financial aid programs administered by the U.S. Public Health Service, please write to:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Public Health Service
Health Resources and Services Administration
Bureau of Health Professions
Division of Student Assistance
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

The Montgomery GI Bill -Active Duty is a program of education benefits for students who enter active duty for the first time after June 30, 1985. The student must, with certain exceptions, serve continuously on active duty for three years of a three-year enlistment or, for a lesser benefit, two years of an initial active duty obligation of less than three years. A student also may qualify for education benefits by initially serving two continuous years on active duty, followed by four years of service in the Selected Reserve.

The Montgomery GI Bill -Selected Reserve is a program of education benefits for reservists of the armed forces as well as the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard. To be eligible for this program, a reservist must have a six-year obligation to serve in the Selected Reserve, complete Initial Active Duty for Training, have a high school diploma or its equivalent, and remain in good standing in a drilling unit of the Selected Reserve.

If a student has a parent who is a military veteran, the student may qualify for help from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Education assistance benefits are available to spouses and children of:

- ❑ veterans who died or are permanently and totally disabled as the result of a disability arising from active service in the Armed Forces;
- ❑ veterans who died from any cause while rated permanently and totally disabled from service-connected disability;
- ❑ service persons presently missing in action or captured in the line of duty by a hostile force; or
- ❑ service persons presently detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power.

Benefits may be awarded to pursue associate, bachelor, or graduate degrees at colleges and universities. Courses leading to a certificate or diploma from a business, technical, or vocational school may also be taken. For further information on the Montgomery GI bill and other veterans benefits, students should call the toll-free number for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, **1-800-827-1000**.

The Department of Veterans Affairs also administers the **VA Health Professionals Educational Assistance Programs**. The **Scholarship Awards Program** provides awards on a competitive basis for undergraduate and graduate students in health-care shortage categories such as nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and nurse anesthesia. The **Reserve Member Stipend Awards Program** provides aid for students who are (1) in the last year of an associate degree program in nursing or (2) in either the third or fourth year of a master's program in nursing, physical therapy, or occupational therapy. The reservist must also be a member of the Selected Ready Reserves, eligible for the Reserve GI Bill, and have a score above the 50th percentile on the Armed Forces Qualification Test. In return for awards from these programs, a participant is required to provide professional service for a designated period at a VA medical center. For further information, contact: The Health Professionals

Educational Assistance Programs (143B), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Academic Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20420, or call 1-202-273-5400.

DOD

Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) is a program that provides college-trained officers for the U.S. Army, the Army National Guard, and the U.S. Army Reserve. The program is offered at hundreds of colleges and universities across the nation. Four-year scholarships are awarded on a competitive basis to students who will be entering college as freshmen. The scholarships may be worth up to $48,000, paying for most college tuition and on-campus education fees, as well as an additional allowance for textbooks, supplies, equipment, and personal expenses. Application packets, information on eligibility, and the telephone number of an ROTC advisor in a student's area may be obtained from: Army ROTC, Gold Quest Center, PO Box 3279, Warminster, PA 18974-0128 or by calling 1-800-USA-ROTC.

The **Air Force ROTC** college scholarship program is intended for high school seniors or graduates who haven't enrolled as full-time college students. The scholarship program is especially targeted to those pursuing technical degrees. Four-year scholarships may be lengthened to five years in certain academic majors and programs. Air Force ROTC scholarships are awarded on individual merit, not on financial need. The Air Force also offers scholarships to individuals who are already in college. These scholarships cover one to three years of a bachelor's degree program in certain engineering and science majors as well as in other job categories. There are also scholarships for premed majors. Applications for Air Force ROTC scholarships may be obtained by writing to: HQ AFROTC\RROO, 551 East Maxwell Blvd., Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6106.

The Naval Reserve Officers' Training Corps (NROTC) program offers young men and women an opportunity to qualify for commissions in the Navy and Marine Corps while attending college. This four-year scholarship is available to students who have graduated from high school before August 1 of the year they intend to start college. Scholarships are awarded annually on the basis of a competitive selection process in which consideration is given to such factors as high school class standings, college entrance test scores, extracurricular activities, and leadership qualities. Academic accomplishments in rigorous, technically demanding courses are considered especially noteworthy. During the student's years of college study, the Navy pays tuition, the cost of textbooks, fees of an instructional nature, and a subsistence allowance of $100 per month for a maximum of 40 academic

months. For information concerning the NROTC scholarship program contact any college that offers NROTC or write to: Commander, Navy Recruiting Command/Code 314, 4015 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22203.

Non-Federal Sources: State, Private, Institutional

Students should be encouraged to contact their **state agencies** for information about **state programs**. A student might qualify for a private grant or scholarship for any of the following reasons: academic achievement, religious affiliation, ethnic or racial heritage, community activities, artistic talents, leadership potential, athletic ability, career plans, proposed field of study, or hobbies and special interests. The American Legion offers an inexpensive guide to private sources of aid called *Need a Lift?* (See Appendix A for the address.) Other books about financial aid may be available through your school library or public library. In addition, many postsecondary schools have their own sources of student financial aid. A student should contact the schools he or she is applying to for information about institutional aid.

Lastly, there are **computerized scholarship search services** that will match a prospective student with sources of financial aid. These services tend to be relatively expensive, so a student or parent should consider the extent of the search being offered before committing to such a service. More than 75 percent of all aid awarded comes from federal and state programs that students can easily find out about through *Funding Your Education* and other publications. If someone has had problems with a scholarship search firm, he or she may contact the local Better Business Bureau or the U.S. Postal Service. Some services guarantee that the student will be eligible for at least five sources of financial aid; however, please be aware that these sources may include the major federal student aid programs that are discussed in this handbook and in *Funding Your Education*. Students may get a free copy of *Funding Your Education* from their local school or library or by calling the U.S. Department of Education's toll-free number, 1-800-4-FED-AID.

General eligibility requirements for student aid

All sources of financial aid have some kind of **eligibility requirements**. Financial aid from a state usually requires that the recipient be a resident of that state. Some scholarships specify that the recipient must be enrolling in a particular field of study or have maintained a high grade point average in high school.

Eligibility for most of the federal student aid programs is based on **financial need** rather than academic achievement. To have their financial need determined, students must complete and file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). How to obtain and complete this important document is discussed in detail in Part 3 of this handbook.

In addition to the financial need requirement, federal student aid programs require that the student recipient:

- ❑ have a high school diploma or a GED, receive a passing score on an independently administered examination approved by the Department, or meet other standards established by your state and approved by the Department;
- ❑ enroll as a regular student in an eligible degree or certificate program;
- ❑ be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen;
- ❑ have a valid Social Security Number;
- ❑ make satisfactory academic progress; and
- ❑ sign statements regarding Selective Service Registration Status, Educational Purpose, and Certification on Overpayments and Defaults.

A student must enroll at least half time to be eligible for Direct Loans or FFELs.

Demonstrating need

As we've said, a student must demonstrate **financial need** to be eligible for most federal student aid. Quantifying a family's need for financial assistance has often been controversial, but it is not a recent issue. In fact, uniform systems of need analysis were developed by the financial aid community in the 1950s, before most of the federal student aid programs were established.

At its simplest level, a student's financial need is the **difference** between the student's **cost of attendance** at the school and the amount **the family is expected to contribute to the student's education**.

The financial aid administrator usually develops an average **cost of attendance** for different categories of students. Some programs of study might have lab fees or higher charges for books and supplies than other programs. Students living off-campus might have higher costs for room and board and transportation expenses than students living on-campus.

For the federal student aid programs, the financial aid administrator must use the definition of "cost of attendance" given in the law. The law specifies that the cost of attendance includes tuition and fees and an allowance for living expenses, such as room and board, books and supplies, and transportation costs. The law also provides limited allowances for loan fees, dependent-care costs, and expenses for disabled students.

The process of **need analysis** focuses on determining how much the family reasonably can be expected to contribute toward the student's education. Traditionally, financial aid administrators have determined the amount a family can contribute by collecting information about the family's income and assets and making reasonable allowances for the family's living expenses. The law has adopted much of the traditional approach to need analysis for the federal student aid programs. There is a single formula for federal student aid, which produces the **Expected Family Contribution (EFC)**. The EFC is used to award Federal Pell Grants, campus-based aid, Direct Subsidized Loans, and subsidized Federal Stafford Loans.

To determine the amount of a student's Federal Pell Grant, the financial aid administrator looks up the cost of attendance and the EFC on a payment schedule to determine the award. The lower the EFC is, the higher the grant award is. A student with a zero EFC has the most need and receives the largest possible amount of Federal Pell Grant funds. A student with an EFC above the cutoff point is not eligible for a Federal Pell Grant.

The Federal Pell Grant Program is presumed to be the first source of aid to the student, so the award process for a Federal Pell Grant does not consider other sources of aid. For 1995-96, the maximum yearly grant was $2,340, and the cutoff for eligibility was an EFC of $2,140.* Also note that awards do not change above a certain cost of attendance. For instance, in 1995-96, the maximum cost that affected the amount of the grant was $2,340; if a student had a zero EFC, the student's award was $2,340 whether the student went to a school that had a cost of attendance of $2,340 or to a school that had a cost of $8,000.

When awarding **campus-based aid or Direct Subsidized Loans** or certifying **subsidized Federal Stafford Loans**, the financial aid administrator must consider other aid available to the student in addition to the amount the family can contribute (EFC). For example, consider a student with an EFC of $500 who enrolls in a program that costs $6,000. The student then needs $5,500 in financial aid to go to school ($6,000 - $500 = $5,500). However, when the student receives a $2,000 Federal Pell Grant and a $1,000 outside scholarship, the student's need is reduced by $3,000. Therefore, the aid administrator can award up to $2,500 in campus-based aid and subsidized Federal Stafford or Direct Subsidized Loan funds ($5,500 - $3,000 = $2,500).

When processing unsubsidized loans, such as a **Direct Unsubsidized Loan** or a **Federal PLUS Loan**, the aid administrator doesn't use the EFC figure to determine the student's or parent's eligibility, because these loans are not need based. However, the amount of the loan may not exceed the difference between the student's cost of attendance and all other aid the student is receiving, including aid from private and other nonfederal sources. The school must consider the student's eligibility for other aid before determining a loan amount. For instance, if an independent student in his or her first year of study has a cost of attendance of $6,000 and is eligible for a maximum Pell Grant of $2,340 and a maximum subsidized Stafford Loan of $2,625, the aid administrator may approve the student for an unsubsidized Stafford Loan of up to $1,035 ($6,000 - $2,340 - $2,625 = $1,035).

*The maximum grant and EFC cutoff are determined each year by Congress. At the time this publication went to print they had not yet been established for 1996-97.

In this section, we have given a simplified overview of how a postsecondary school's financial aid administrator determines a student's financial need for the various federal student aid programs. Using all available federal and nonfederal aid, the financial aid administrator generally puts together a financial aid package that is presented to the student in the form of an award letter. The student may accept or decline any of the financial aid offered in the award letter. The process of **packaging and awarding aid** can be complex, especially when the student is receiving work-study or noninstitutional funds. If a student or a prospective student has questions about his or her financial aid package, these questions should be addressed to the financial aid office that prepared the package.

As we have seen, federal student aid awards ultimately are made on the basis of the student's EFC. It is important to note that even though eligibility for unsubsidized loans (such as Federal Direct PLUS or Federal PLUS Loans) is not based on the student's EFC, the student's eligibility for financial aid awarded on the basis of EFC (such as a Federal Pell Grant, Direct Subsidized Loan, and subsidized Federal Stafford Loan) is considered when awarding these loans.

To have his or her EFC determined, a student must fill out and file the FAFSA. Unlike admissions applications, the FAFSA is sent to a federal government processing center that is independent of postsecondary schools. The student's information is entered into the Department's computer system, which then calculates the student's official EFC. The application process for financial aid is described in Part 2 of this handbook, and completion of the FAFSA is discussed in Part 3 of this handbook.

Choosing a school carefully

In recent years, increasing attention has been given to the default rates for federal student loan programs. Studies show that many borrowers are unable to pay back their student loans because they withdrew from their educational programs or were unable to find good jobs after they graduated. The choice of an educational program and a school can be critical in helping students prepare for gainful employment after graduation.

Students who are seeking career training should be advised to consider the following factors before enrolling at any school.

➤ *Are opportunities in the career field expanding?*

Some careers are relatively stable, such as computer programming, computer systems analysis, accounting, or teaching. Others fluctuate with the economy and changes in technology. For information on career fields, students might want to read the following publications:

Occupational Outlook Handbook, published by the U.S. Department of Labor (order document number S/N 029-001-03158-1 from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office at 202-512-1800)

Getting Skilled, Getting Ahead, published by the Accrediting Commission for Trade and Technical Schools

Occupational Projections and Training Data, published by the U.S. Department of Labor

College to Career: The Guide to Job Opportunities, by Joyce Slayton Mitchell

What Color Is Your Parachute? by Richard Bolles

Students might also want to check the magazine section of the school library for trade and professional magazines and journals that have articles about jobs and training in specific career areas.

➤*Is the career compatible with the student's aptitude and interests?*

A school can be very good but not meet a particular student's specific needs. The type of career a student wants will directly influence the type of postsecondary education he or she will need to pursue (a two-year program, four-year program, or a career/vocational program). Many colleges use admissions tests to measure a student's aptitude. The most familiar college admission tests are the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the Achievement Tests, the American College Test (ACT), and the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). Students generally take these tests during their junior or senior years of high school.

➤*Does a school have a good reputation for educating and placing its students?*

Students should check with the local Better Business Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, or consumer-protection division of their state attorney's office to find out if problems are reported at the schools they are considering. The Federal Student Aid Information Center has the most recent default rates for schools, which can indicate the success of the schools' students; a high default rate may be a sign that the school's graduates are having difficulty finding good-paying jobs. In addition, a default rate greater than 20 percent may eventually jeopardize the school's eligibility to award Federal Stafford and Federal PLUS Loans.

A student should also ask a school representative for the names of the school's accrediting and licensing organizations, which can provide information about the school. Prospective students have the right to ask for a copy of the documents describing a school's accreditation and licensing. If a school is accredited, an approved private educational agency or association has evaluated it and found it meets certain minimum requirements that the agency has set.

➤*How many of a school's students graduate and find employment in the career for which they trained?*

If a school advertises or tells prospective students that it has a successful job-placement program, it must be able to provide statistics, on request, that support that claim. Even if a school doesn't make job-placement claims, it doesn't hurt to ask the school about its graduation rate and job-placement rate. Students should find out if the program the school offers is necessary to get the type of job they want or if employers in that field provide on-the-job training. They should check with employers to see if the school has a good reputation.

In addition, if a school advertises job-placement rates, it must also advise students of any applicable state licensing requirements for the specific jobs for which students are trained. Students should determine if the course topics for their programs relate to these state requirements or other professional certification requirements.

Students should also ask about a school's graduation rate. If a high number of students drop out, it could mean they weren't satisfied with the education they received. It's also a good idea for interested students to talk to recent graduates about a school's courses, average class size, instructors, the quality of facilities and equipment, and the earning potential of graduates. If a school provides residence facilities, students should inspect them.

Students should be encouraged to do some "comparison shopping" before signing an enrollment contract. If there is more than one school offering a particular educational program in the area, a student should visit at least two of the schools before making a decision.

➤*What are a school's administrative and academic policies?*

For example, what is the school's refund policy? A school must provide this policy in writing to current and prospective students. The policy should explain what happens if a student registers for classes but never attends any or drops out of school within a short time after he or she starts. If the student receives any federal student aid and a refund is made, some or all of the money will be returned to those aid programs or to the lender for the loans. Even if students don't finish their educational programs, they will have to repay whatever loans they received, minus the amount that was refunded to the lender.

Students should find out about a school's academic policies, such as the requirements for graduation and maintaining eligibility for financial aid. These policies are often grouped together as a "satisfactory academic progress (SAP) policy."

➤*What types of financial aid does a school offer? Does a school participate in the U.S. Department of Education's student financial aid programs?*

Students should find out what types of financial aid are available at schools where they are interested in applying, including information on all federal, state, local, private, and institutional financial aid programs. A student should ask which financial aid programs are available to students in the educational program he or she is interested in enrolling in, as not all educational programs at a school may be eligible for all aid programs.

The U.S. Department of Education uses specific legislative and regulatory criteria to determine whether a school and all of its educational programs are eligible for federal student aid programs. Just because a school participates in the Department's student aid programs does not mean that the Department has endorsed the quality of the education the school offers. The Department does not approve a school's curriculum, policies, or administrative practices, except as they relate to how the school operates federal student aid programs. It is up to the student to check out a school.

Students should also ask:

- ❑ How does the school select financial aid recipients?
- ❑ What are the school's application procedures and deadlines?
- ❑ How and when does the school deliver financial aid to its students?
- ❑ What are the interest rates and other terms of any student loans?
- ❑ What are the operating hours of the school's financial aid office?

➤ *What can be learned from a visit to a school?*

The real test of any school will be how a student feels about it after a visit. Students should consider making an appointment to visit a school while classes are in session. This will give a student a chance to attend classes and to talk with students in the program he or she is interested in. An especially important point to consider: Do the people at the school seem to want to help students learn and plan for their futures? A student should decide whether the school is a place he or she wants to be at least five days a week for the next six months to several years.

Part 2:

the application process for financial aid

To be considered for most of the federal student aid programs (such as Federal Pell Grants, Federal Direct Stafford Loans, and Federal Stafford Loans), a student must fill out and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This application collects financial and other information used to calculate the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) that ultimately determines the student's eligibility for aid.

The application processing cycle lasts 18 months. For the 1996-97 award year, application processing will begin in January 1996, and applications for that year will be accepted until June 1997. Many schools have limited institutional aid funds that will be awarded in spring 1996 on a "first-come, first-served" basis to eligible students. So, it is important that students complete and submit the FAFSA as early as possible after January 1, 1996 to be sure they are considered for all types of aid from all sources. If submitted (or signed) before that date, the FAFSA will not be processed.

Students who submitted a FAFSA for the 1995-96 award year may receive a Renewal FAFSA to complete for 1996-97. A Renewal FAFSA allows students to update the information they submitted on the FAFSA the previous year, as well as to add some new information. The Renewal FAFSA may be used—and will be processed in the same manner—as the FAFSA. Whenever the term FAFSA is used in this handbook, the same information may be applied to the Renewal FAFSA.

The federal role in application processing

Historically, standards for application processing and need analysis were developed in the 1950s by the financial aid community and independent servicers. As the federal share of need-based aid increased over the years, need analysis became a part of the law, which was later amended to ensure that prospective students could apply for federal aid without paying a fee. The law also requires the Department to contract to the extent practicable with organizations for processing financial aid applications.

Currently, the Department contracts for two different kinds of processing services. The **application processing systems** process the FAFSA and send student information to the **central processing system (CPS)**. The CPS uses this information to calculate the EFC and print the Student Aid Report (SAR). We will refer to the application processors as **FAFSA processors** for purposes of our discussion of the federal student aid delivery system, although several of the processing organizations also may provide other services to students and schools. The Department is in the process of awarding new contracts for the 1996-97 award year. Up to five FAFSA processors may be selected, but there will be only one central processor for the eligibility calculation.

The end result of the federal application process is federal output documents containing an EFC that is determined on the basis of the student's complete and correct FAFSA information. These documents will be a SAR or a SAR-type acknowledgment, which the CPS will mail to the student's home address within four weeks, and an Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR), which a school can obtain electronically. Only schools listed in Part H of a student's FAFSA can automatically obtain an ISIR. The EFC and the data supplied by the student are printed on the SAR or ISIR. For a student to receive federal student aid, the school must receive either the SAR from the student or the ISIR from the CPS. Even if the school receives the information directly from the processing system, students must carefully review the processed information to make sure it is correct.

How to apply

A student *must* apply for federal student aid by using a FAFSA. A student must complete a FAFSA even if he or she is applying only for a federal loan. A student does not have to pay a fee for submitting a FAFSA. However, a student may be required to fill out additional questions on a separate, nonfederal form to be considered for state or institutional aid, and a fee may be charged for processing this additional data. Students should check with the schools to which they plan to apply and their state agencies to find out if they use the FAFSA to award aid or if they require applicants to submit additional information.

Students may also apply for aid electronically through the Electronic Data Exchange (EDE) or FAFSA Express. Students who file through EDE should first complete a paper FAFSA to take to the school. Students filing through either EDE or FAFSA Express will need copies of their income tax returns (and their parents' returns), W-2 forms, current bank statements, and records of any stocks, bonds, and other investments and assets to help them complete the electronic FAFSA.

For schools that participate, EDE allows financial aid administrators or students to enter the data required for the FAFSA using a personal computer or a mainframe system. After the financial aid administrator reviews the entered data, the information is sent electronically to the CPS. The CPS in turn processes it and sends the school an electronic ISIR and the student a SAR-type acknowledgment containing the student's information.

In 1995-96, the Department introduced a new electronic application system called FAFSA Express. FAFSA Express allows students to apply electronically without going to a school to use EDE; it requires only an IBM compatible computer and a modem (a printer is also recommended). Copies of the 1996-97 FAFSA Express program will be available to libraries, postsecondary schools, and high schools. The Department will provide schools and libraries with information on ordering when the program becomes available. After the student completes the FAFSA using FAFSA Express, he or she will transmit it to the CPS. If a printer is available, the student can print, sign, and mail a signature page to the FAFSA processor. The CPS will process the data and send the student a SAR; if the student did not send a signature page, this SAR must be signed and returned.

Submitting an initial application

Students must complete the FAFSA accurately. If a student submits a paper FAFSA, it must be legible and mailed in time for the processor to receive it by the deadline. The same deadlines apply if a student is filing the FAFSA electronically. (See page 37 for a complete list of deadlines.) The FAFSA must be mailed to the address specified in the FAFSA the student completed. Please caution students that there are **NO EXCEPTIONS** to the deadlines. It is important to note that states and schools often set earlier deadlines in awarding aid from some programs, including the campus-based programs (Federal Perkins Loans, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, and Federal Work-Study). Students should find out their schools' deadlines well in advance of applying for financial aid. A student must also keep in mind that eligibility does not continue year to year and a FAFSA needs to be filed each year.

If you could give students only one piece of advice as they complete a FAFSA, it should be to **READ THE INSTRUCTIONS**. This cannot be overemphasized; most errors are caused by students making assumptions about what information is being requested. Errors on the application, such as an incorrect Social Security Number, also cause delays in processing. Such delays may cause students who are otherwise eligible to miss the deadline to qualify for aid.

In unusual circumstances, a student who would normally be considered dependent can be considered independent. The financial aid administrator at a school can make a special determination of independence and override the student's dependency status on the application. Students who believe that they have compelling and unique reasons to be considered independent should contact the financial aid office before submitting the application. See Part 3, Section D of this handbook for a complete discussion of "Student Status."

It is important for students to save all records and other materials used in completing the FAFSA because they may need them later if either the Department or their schools select them for a process called verification (see page 32). This means that the students will have to prove that what was reported on the aid application is correct. Students should keep photocopies of their completed FAFSAs.

✔ ***Note: A student may not submit a 1996-97 FAFSA to an application processor before January 1, 1996.***

How the application is processed

The CPS analyzes the information from the FAFSA and calculates an EFC to determine how much a student and his or her parents can be expected to pay toward the student's education. As discussed in Part 1, the EFC measures the family's financial strength on the basis of the income and assets of the student and the student's parents or, if the student is married, the student's spouse. The EFC formula also takes into account the family's expenses relative to the number of persons in the household and how many of them will be attending college during the award year.

If the EFC is less than the **cost of attendance** at a particular school, a student planning to attend that school is considered to have financial need. A full-time student who receives a zero EFC will receive the maximum Federal Pell Grant award available at the school. The higher a student's EFC is, the lower the student's need for Federal Pell Grant assistance is. If the student's EFC is above a maximum number determined each award year by Congress, the student will not receive a Federal Pell Grant. Please see Part 1, "Demonstrating Need," for a complete discussion of this concept.

The CPS uses a series of edits to check the consistency of student-provided information on a FAFSA. For instance, it would be inconsistent for the dependent student of a single parent to report income earned from work for two parents. If a student's information is inconsistent, the CPS may be unable to calculate the EFC, or it may calculate an EFC using assumptions built into the processing system. If assumptions have been used, they will be indicated on the SAR or ISIR; the student must make sure the assumptions are correct.

Applications signed or sent before January 1, 1996 or after June 30, 1997 will be returned to the student unprocessed with a letter explaining why the application was not processed.

If the student submits a second application, the CPS does not reprocess the data from the second application. Instead, the same information that appeared on the student's most recent SAR will appear on the SAR that results from the subsequent application, regardless of what was reported on that subsequent application. The only information that may change as a result of a subsequent application is the student's address and the schools the student lists.

Data Matches

The CPS also performs several eligibility matches through databases. If a student's records do not satisfy the eligibility match requirements of one or more of the databases, the student's records are flagged. If a student's records are flagged, the student may not be eligible to receive federal aid unless the discrepancy is resolved. Resolving such a discrepancy usually requires the student to submit additional documentation to the school where he or she is applying. This is noted on the SAR or ISIR.

The CPS sends records to the Social Security Administration to check the validity of a student's Social Security Number (SSN). If the SSN is invalid, the student will receive a rejected SAR, and a comment will appear on the SAR or ISIR instructing him or her to review the SSN. The student will also receive a comment on the SAR if the SSN is a valid number but the name and/or date of birth reported on the FAFSA does not match the Social Security Administration's records.

In addition, the Department maintains the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS), which identifies students who have defaulted on any Federal Direct or Federal Family Education Loan, or any other federal student loan held by a state guaranty agency or the Department. If a student is found to be in default and has not made satisfactory arrangements to repay, he or she will receive a comment on the SAR or ISIR saying he or she is ineligible for aid until the default status is resolved. The NSLDS is scheduled to be expanded over the next few years to collect and maintain additional information about students' participation in the SFA programs.

The CPS also performs matches against drug abuse conviction records maintained by the U.S. Department of Justice, citizenship records maintained by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, and registration status information maintained by the Selective Service System.

Reviewing the Student Aid Report

The SAR comes in two parts, with each part serving a specific purpose. Once students receive their SARs, they should take or send them to the schools they plan to attend. Students should be reminded to submit the SAR as soon as possible, so that the school's financial aid administrator can assemble a comprehensive financial aid package. As noted earlier, some schools may already have received this information electronically. If a student has applied to more than one school and is uncertain which school he or she will attend, the student should take or send a photocopy of the SAR to each of the schools.

Corrections and some changes can be made to the SAR, which has been designed so that the item numbers correspond to the numbered questions on the FAFSA. SARs for dependent and independent students contain exactly the same data elements. All necessary changes, including corrections to dependency status, can be and should be made directly on Part 2 of the SAR, or through EDE.

Part 1 - Information Summary

Part 1 of the SAR is the Information Summary. This part serves as an **eligibility letter to the student**. Unless the student's FAFSA has been rejected, the EFC is printed on the front (at the upper right), along with an explanation of the calculation and instructions for the student. A summary of the student's information is printed on the back of Part 1. Part 1 also contains a page of summary data from the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS). If the student has not had any previous federal student loans, this page will be blank.

Part 2 - Information Review Form/Information Request Form

The student uses the **Information Review Form** to make corrections, if necessary, and to update certain items if they have changed since the FAFSA was completed and submitted. Part 2 has an expanded listing of the student's information under the "You told us" column, with space, if needed, for the student to correct the information under the column headed "The correct answer is." Data elements that are questioned are highlighted in bold type in Part 2. The parental data fields are shaded to distinguish parental data from student data. Part 2 also contains a Helpful Hints section and a For Your Information section.

Rejected Student Aid Reports

A rejected SAR is one that does not include an EFC calculation. Rejected SARs will be sent when applications have insufficient data to calculate an EFC. Students may also receive a rejected SAR if there are other problems with their data, such as an invalid Social Security Number. Part 2 of a rejected SAR will be an **Information Request Form**, rather than an Information Review Form. This form provides space for the student to confirm data and/or provide new data. Students must either provide missing information or correct or confirm information that is questioned before an EFC can be calculated. If a student receives a rejected SAR, the student must correct the information using Part 2 of the SAR. The comments on Part 1 of the SAR will tell the student how to proceed.

Verification

The effectiveness of the federal student financial aid programs depends, in large part, on the **accuracy of the data** reported by students. It directly affects the eligibility of millions of applicants for these programs. Because of this, schools must verify information provided by students selected by the CPS, following the procedures established by regulations. The CPS prints an asterisk next to the EFC on the SAR to identify students who have been selected for verification. A school's financial aid administrator must check the information the student reported on the financial aid application, usually by requesting a copy of the signed tax returns filed by the student and, if applicable, the student's parent(s) or spouse. Many schools also select applications for verification in addition to those selected by the CPS.

Making changes

There are situations where the student will have to change information that was reported on the application. Usually, this consists of correcting errors on the SAR or updating certain items.

Corrections

When a student files a FAFSA, it creates a snapshot of the financial situation of the student's family as of the date the application was signed. However, errors may occur because the student filled in the wrong information on the FAFSA or the information was entered incorrectly by the FAFSA processor. A student should use Part 2 of the SAR to correct application errors. If the student applied through the Electronic Data Exchange (EDE), he or she can also make changes electronically. Even if the student did not apply through EDE, the school may still be able to make corrections electronically. The student should contact the school to find out if it participates in EDE. The results of electronically submitted corrections will be transmitted to the school sooner than the results of a corrected SAR mailed to a processor.

An example of a FAFSA correction might be that of a dependent student who reported $20,000 of 1995 taxed income for her parents on a FAFSA filed on March 10, 1996. While reviewing her SAR, she notices that she used her parents' total income from the tax return rather than the requested 1995 Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) figure from the tax return, which was $17,000. As the correct amount was $17,000, the student may make the correction to this item electronically, or correct it on Part 2 of the SAR, under the column headed "The correct answer is" and return the SAR to the processor.

The student may not, however, *update* income or asset information to reflect changes to her family's financial situation that took place after the FAFSA was filed. For example, if the same student's family sold some of their stock on June 1 and spent that money on a non-reported asset such as a car, the student may not update her information to show a change in the family's assets.

If the student's information has minor inconsistencies, the CPS may be able to make assumptions to calculate an official EFC. In this case, the CPS will highlight the inconsistent

information on Part 2 of the SAR. The student will be asked to review this information carefully for errors (and correct and return the SAR to be processed if there are any inconsistencies) before submitting the SAR to financial aid offices at schools where he or she has applied.

Updating Information

As noted previously, most of the information on the FAFSA may not be updated to reflect changes that occur after the application has been filed. However, there are three items that a student *must* update if the information reported on the FAFSA changes for a reason other than a change in the student's marital status.

- Dependency Status. All dependency status changes made during the award year must be reported by using the SAR or EDE.
- Number of family members (household size). The student may use the SAR or EDE to report a change in household size.
- Number of college students. The student may use the SAR or EDE to report a change in the number of family members who are attending postsecondary school.

Dependency Overrides

Sometimes a student has unusual circumstances that may justify overriding the dependency status determined by Section D of the FAFSA. The student should contact the financial aid office at the school he or she plans to attend to determine whether there are unusual circumstances that warrant an override of the student's dependency status. Please see Part 3, Section D for more information on student dependency status.

Adding a School

If a student wants to have his or her application information sent to an additional school after filing a FAFSA, the student may correct the SAR to add the new school. (See Part 3, Section H of this handbook for additional information on adding a school.)

Filing a financial aid application

To apply for federal student aid... **...fill out a FAFSA either on paper or electronically**	Prospective students who are applying for the first time in the award year should fill out the FAFSA and send it to the processor identified on the accompanying envelope. Some students may be able to file the FAFSA electronically using a computer at a participating school or using FAFSA Express.
To apply for the first time, using dependency override... **...aid administrator must authorize override on FAFSA**	If it appears that the applicant should be considered an independent student because of special circumstances, the financial aid administrator has the authority to approve a dependency override on the FAFSA.
To correct application information... **...use Part 2 of the SAR or EDE**	If the applicant discovers errors on the SAR, he or she must correct those errors on Part 2 of the SAR and return it to the FAFSA processor that printed the SAR. (Corrections also can be made electronically using EDE.) The information on the SAR may only be corrected to what was accurate on the date the application was signed.
To update dependency status, household size, or number in postsecondary education... **...use Part 2 of the SAR or EDE**	A student must update dependency status, household size, and number of family members in postsecondary education if that information changes during the school year, unless the change was the result of a change in the student's marital status. This information may be updated by using Part 2 of the SAR or through EDE if the school uses the EDE system.
To override dependency status after first application has been filed... **...a financial aid administrator must authorize the override on the SAR or through EDE**	If an applicant has already filed an application, but the financial aid administrator determines that he or she should be considered an independent student because of special circumstances, the administrator may override the dependency status on the SAR or through EDE.
If the family has special circumstances... **...the financial aid administrator may make individual adjustments**	If the aid administrator believes that the family's circumstances warrant a change in the need analysis, the aid administrator may use professional judgment to adjust the student's cost of attendance or data elements on which the student's EFC is calculated.

1996-97 Application deadlines

A **FAFSA** or a **Renewal FAFSA** (paper or electronic) must be received by the application processor no later than
June 30, 1997.

If a student needs to make **SAR** corrections, the SAR must be received by the application processor no later than
July 31, 1997.*

A student may request a **duplicate SAR** by telephone or in writing through **July 31, 1997.***

To establish eligibility for a Federal Pell Grant, a student must either submit a valid SAR to the school's financial aid office or the school must receive a valid ISIR while the student is still enrolled for that award year, but no later than
June 30, 1997.*

A student whose application information is being **verified** may be given up to 60 days after his or her last day of enrollment to submit the SAR to the school or make sure the school receives the ISIR. However, the verification extension cannot continue beyond
August 28, 1997.*

To establish eligibility for a Federal Pell Grant, a student must submit the final, correct SAR or the school must receive a valid ISIR by the relevant deadline date above. A school may set an earlier deadline for students to submit paperwork for initial applications or for changes to be made through EDE.

*At the time this handbook went to print, the Department was considering changing these dates to later dates. However, the school must still receive the SAR or ISIR while the student is enrolled, or within 60 days of the last day of enrollment for a student whose application is being verified. Students should check with their schools if they need to find out if the deadline date has changed.

Part 3:

filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid

As mentioned earlier, in Part 2 of this handbook, a student does not have to pay a fee for having the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) processed. Information collected on this application is, by law, used to calculate the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The FAFSA is developed by the U.S. Department of Education in conjunction with other agencies. Comments on the design of the form may be sent to:

Application and Pell Processing Systems Division
U.S. Department of Education
600 Independence Avenue, SW
ROB-3, Room 4621 MS 5454
Washington, DC 20202

For 1996-97, the FAFSA is white, red, and gray. Dependent students must complete the white and red areas; independent students must complete the white and gray areas.

The instructions included with the application explain how each question is to be answered. They should be read with great care and attention. In the following pages, we have provided a copy of the 1996-97 FAFSA. In addition, because the instructions cannot address every possible family situation, we will discuss the purpose of the FAFSA questions and discuss how information should be reported in some unusual cases.

To complete the FAFSA, use dark ink or a No. 2 pencil. Dollar amounts should be rounded to the nearest whole dollar. Dates must be reported in numbers using hyphens, such as 02-14-96 for February 14, 1996.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid

1996-97 School Year

"You" and "your" on this form always mean the student who wants aid.

Print in capital letters with a dark ink. BER24 *Fill in ovals completely.* Right ● Wrong ⊗ ✓

Section A: You (the student)

1–3. Your name — 1. Last name | 2. First name | 3. M.I.

Your title (optional) — Mr. ○1 Miss, Mrs., or Ms. ○2

4–7. Your permanent mailing address *(All mail will be sent to this address. See Instructions, page 2 for state/country abbreviations.)*

4. Number and street (Include apt. no.)

5. City | 6. State | 7. ZIP code

8. Your social security number (SSN) *(Don't leave blank. See Instructions, page 2.)*

9. Your date of birth — Month Day Year

10. Your permanent home telephone number — Area code

11. Your state of legal residence — State

12. Date you became a legal resident of the state in question 11 *(See Instructions, page 2.)* — Month Day Year

13–14. Your driver's license number *(Include the state abbreviation. If you don't have a license, write in "None.")*

State | License number

15–16. Are you a U.S. citizen? *(See Instructions, pages 2–3.)*

Yes, I am a U.S. citizen. ○1

No, but I am an eligible noncitizen. ○2 — A

No, neither of the above. ○3

17. As of today, are you married? *(Fill in only one oval.)*

I am not married. (I am single, widowed, or divorced.) ○1

I am married. ○2

I am separated from my spouse. ○3

18. Date you were married, separated, divorced, or widowed. If divorced, use date of divorce or separation, whichever is earlier. *(If never married, leave blank.)* — Month Year

19. Will you have your first bachelor's degree before July 1, 1996? Yes ○1 No ○2

Section B: Education Background

20–21. Date that you (the student) received, or will receive, your high school diploma, either—

- by graduating from high school — Month Year

OR

- by earning a GED — Month Year

(Enter one date. Leave blank if the question does not apply to you.)

22–23. Highest educational level or grade level your father and your mother completed. *(Fill in one oval for each parent. See Instructions, page 3.)*

	22. Father	23. Mother
elementary school (K–8)	○1	○1
high school (9–12)	○2	○2
college or beyond	○3	○3
unknown	○4	○4

If you (and your family) have unusual circumstances, complete this form and then check with your financial aid administrator. Examples:

- tuition expenses at an elementary or secondary school,
- unusual medical or dental expenses not covered by insurance,
- a family member who recently became unemployed, or
- other unusual circumstances such as changes in income or assets that might affect your eligibility for student financial aid.

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Section C: Your Plans *Answer these questions about your college plans.*

24–28. Your expected enrollment status for the 1996-97 school year *(See Instructions, page 3.)*

School term	Full time	3/4 time	1/2 time	Less than 1/2 time	Not enrolled
24. Summer term '96	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
25. Fall semester/qtr. '96	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
26. Winter quarter '96-97	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
27. Spring semester/qtr. '97	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
28. Summer term '97	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

29. Your course of study *(See Instructions for code, page 3.)* Code ☐

30–31. College degree/certificate you expect to receive **and** the date you expect to receive it *(See Instructions for code, page 3.)*

30. Degree/certificate ☐

31. Date Month ☐☐ Day ☐☐ Year ☐☐☐☐

32. Your grade level during the 1996-97 school year *(Fill in only one.)*

1st yr./never attended college	○ 1	5th year/other undergraduate	○ 6
1st yr./attended college before	○ 2	1st year graduate/professional	○ 7
2nd year/sophomore	○ 3	2nd year graduate/professional	○ 8
3rd year/junior	○ 4	3rd year graduate/professional	○ 9
4th year/senior	○ 5	Beyond 3rd year graduate/professional	○ 0

33–35. In addition to grants, what other types of financial aid are you (and your parents) interested in? *(See Instructions, page 3.)*

33. Student employment	Yes ○ 1	No ○ 2
34. Student loans	Yes ○ 1	No ○ 2
35. Parent loans for students	Yes ○ 1	No ○ 2

36. If you are (or were) in college, do you plan to attend **that same college** in 1996-97? *(If this doesn't apply to you, leave blank.)* Yes ○ 1 No ○ 2

37. For how many dependents will you pay child care or elder care expenses in 1996-97? ☐

38–39. Veterans education benefits you expect to receive from July 1, 1996 through June 30, 1997

38. Amount per month ☐☐☐☐

39. Number of months ☐☐

Section D: Student Status

40. Were you born **before** January 1, 1973?	Yes ○ 1	No ○ 2
41. Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces?	Yes ○ 1	No ○ 2
42. Will you be enrolled in a graduate or professional program (beyond a bachelor's degree) in 1996-97?	Yes ○ 1	No ○ 2
43. Are you married?	Yes ○ 1	No ○ 2
44. Are you an orphan or a ward of the court, or **were** you a ward of the court until age 18?	Yes ○ 1	No ○ 2
45. Do you have legal dependents **(other than a spouse)** that fit the definition in Instructions, page 4?	Yes ○ 1	No ○ 2

If you answered "Yes" to any question in Section D, go to Section E and fill out the GRAY and the WHITE areas on the rest of this form.

If you answered "No" to every question in Section D, go to Section E and fill out the RED and the WHITE areas on the rest of this form.

Section E: Household Information

If you are filling out the GRAY and WHITE areas, answer questions 46 and 47 and go to Section F.

If you are filling out the RED and WHITE areas, skip questions 46 and 47. Answer questions 48 through 52 about your parents, and then go on to Section F.

STUDENT (& SPOUSE)

46. Number in your household in 1996-97 *(Include yourself and your spouse. Do not include your children and other people unless they meet the definition in Instructions, page 4.)* ☐☐

47. Number of college students in household in 1996-97 *(Of the number in 46, how many will be in college at least half-time in at least one term in an eligible program? Include yourself. See Instructions, page 4.)* ☐

PARENT(S)

48. Your parents' **current** marital status:

single ○ 1 married ○ 2 separated ○ 3 divorced ○ 4 widowed ○ 5

49. Your parent(s)' state of legal residence State ☐☐

50. Date your parent(s) became legal resident(s) of the state in question 49 *(See Instructions, page 5.)* Month ☐☐ Day ☐☐ Year ☐☐☐☐

51. Number in your parents' household in 1996-97 *(Include yourself and your parents. Do not include your parents' other children and other people unless they meet the definition in Instructions, page 5.)* ☐☐

52. Number of college students in household in 1996-97 *(Of the number in 51, how many will be in college at least half-time in at least one term in an eligible program? Include yourself. See Instructions, page 5.)* ☐

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Section F: 1995 Income, Earnings, and Benefits

Everyone must fill out the Student (& Spouse) column.

You must see Instructions, pages 5 and 6, for information about tax forms and tax filing status, especially if you are estimating taxes or filing electronically or by telephone. These instructions will tell you what income and benefits should be reported in this section.

The following 1995 U.S. income tax figures are from:

	STUDENT (& SPOUSE) 53. (Fill in only one.)	PARENT(S) 65. (Fill in only one.)
A—a completed 1995 IRS Form 1040A, 1040EZ, or 1040TEL	○ 1	A ○ 1
B—a completed 1995 IRS Form 1040	○ 2	B ○ 2
C—an estimated 1995 IRS Form 1040A, 1040EZ,or 1040TEL	○ 3	C ○ 3
D—an estimated 1995 IRS Form 1040	○ 4	D ○ 4
E—will not file a 1995 U.S. income tax return *(Skip to question 57.)*	○ 5	E *(Skip to 69.)* ○ 5

TAX FILERS ONLY

	STUDENT (& SPOUSE)	PARENT(S)
1995 Total number of exemptions (Form 1040–line 6e, or 1040A–line 6e; 1040EZ filers— *see Instructions, page 6.*)	54.	66.
1995 Adjusted Gross Income (AGI: Form 1040–line 31, 1040A–line 16, or 1040EZ–line 4—*see Instructions, page 6.*)	55. $ .00	67. $ .00
1995 U.S. income tax **paid** (Form 1040–line 46, 1040A–line 25, or 1040EZ–line 10	56. $ .00	68. $ .00
1995 Income earned from work (Student)	57. $ .00	(Father) 69. $ .00
1995 Income earned from work (Spouse)	58. $ .00	(Mother) 70. $ .00
1995 Untaxed income and benefits (yearly totals only):		
Earned Income Credit (Form 1040–line 57; Form 1040A–line 29c; Form 1040EZ–line 8)	59. $ .00	71. $ .00
Social Security Benefits	60. $ .00	72. $ .00
Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC/ADC)	61. $ .00	73. $ .00
Child support received for all children	62. $ .00	74. $ .00
Other untaxed income and benefits from Worksheet #2, page 11	63. $ .00	75. $ .00
1995 Total from Worksheet #3, page 12	64. $ .00	76. $ .00

ATTENTION

Section G: Asset Information

Fill out Worksheet A or Worksheet B in Instructions, page 7.

If you meet the tax filing and income conditions on Worksheets A and B, you do not have to complete Section G to apply for Federal student aid. Some states and colleges, however, require Section G information for their own aid programs. Check with your financial aid administrator.

Age of your older parent 84.

	STUDENT (& SPOUSE)	PARENT(S)
Cash, savings, and checking accounts	77. $ .00	85. $ .00
Other real estate and investments value *(Don't include the home.)*	78. $ .00	86. $ .00
Other real estate and investments debt *(Don't include the home.)*	79. $ .00	87. $ .00
Business value	80. $ .00	88. $ .00
Business debt	81. $ .00	89. $ .00
Investment farm value *(See Instructions, page 8.)*	82. $ .00	90. $ .00
Investment farm debt *(See Instructions, page 8.)*	83. $ .00	91. $ .00

Section H: Releases and Signatures

92–103. What college(s) do you plan to attend in 1996–97?
(Note: The colleges you list below will have access to your application information. See Instructions, page 8.)

Housing codes		
	1—on-campus	3—with parent(s)
	2—off-campus	4—with relative(s) other than parent(s)

	Title IV Code	College Name	College Street Address and City	State	Housing Code
XX.	0 5 4 3 2 1	*Example University*	*14930 North Somewhere Boulevard Anywhere City*	S T	XX. 2
92.					93.
94.					95.
96.					97.
98.					99.
100.					101.
102.					103.

104. The U.S. Department of Education will send information from this form to your state financial aid agency and the state agencies of the colleges listed above so they can consider you for state aid. Answer "No" if you **don't** want information released to the state. *(See "Deadlines for State Student Aid" in Instructions, page 10.)* ..... **104.** No ○ 2

105. Males not yet registered for Selective Service: Do you want us to register you? *(See Instructions, page 9.)* ..... **105.** Yes ○ 1

106–107. Read, Sign, and Date

All of the information provided by me or any other person on this form is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that this application is being filed jointly by all signatories. If asked by an authorized official, I agree to give proof of the information that I have given on this form. I realize that this proof may include a copy of my U.S. or state income tax return. I also realize that if I do not give proof when asked, the student may be denied aid.

Certification Statement on Overpayments and Defaults. I understand that I may not receive any Federal Title IV, HEA funds if I owe an overpayment on any Title IV educational grant or am in default on a Title IV educational loan unless I have made satisfactory arrangements to repay or otherwise resolve the overpayment or default. I also understand that I must notify my school if I do owe an overpayment or am in default.

Statement of Educational Purpose. I certify that I will use any Federal Title IV, HEA funds I receive during the award year covered by this application solely for expenses related to my attendance at the institution of higher education that determined or certified my eligibility for those funds.

Everyone whose information is given on this form should sign below. The student (and at least one parent, if parental information is given), must sign below or this form will be returned unprocessed.

106. Signatures

1 Student
2 Student's Spouse
3 Father/Stepfather
4 Mother/Stepmother

107. Date completed

Month Day

Year 1996 ○
1997 ○

School Use Only D/O ○

Title IV Code

FAA Signature

MDE Use Only *Do not write in this box* — Spec. handle ☐ No. copies ☐

Section I: Preparer's Use Only

For preparers other than student, spouse, and parent(s). Student, spouse, and parent(s), sign above.

Preparer's name (last, first, MI)

Firm name

Firm or preparer's address (street, city, state, ZIP)

108. Employer identification number (EIN)

OR

109. Preparer's social security number

Certification: All of the information on this form is true and complete to the best of my knowledge.

110. Preparer's signature **Date**

MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE COMPLETED, DATED, AND SIGNED THIS APPLICATION.
Mail the application to: Federal Student Aid Programs, P.O. Box ----, XXXXXXX

Section A "You (the student)"

Purpose: *The FAFSA collects identifying information that is used to track a student (name, telephone number, address, Social Security Number, and so on) and other information that affects a student's basic financial aid eligibility. For instance, Section A includes a question about citizenship status because a student must be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen to receive federal student aid. Similarly, a student who has a bachelor's degree is ineligible to receive a Federal Pell Grant or an FSEOG.*

Questions 4-7 ask for a student's permanent mailing address. The student must give a **permanent home mailing address** (not a school or office address).

Question 8 asks for a student's **Social Security Number (SSN)**. A student must have a Social Security Number to apply for federal financial aid. If the student submits a FAFSA without a Social Security Number, the FAFSA will be returned to the student unprocessed. To get an SSN, or to determine what it is if a student's Social Security card has been lost, the student must contact the local Social Security office. The one exception to the SSN requirement is for students from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, or the Republic of Palau. The FAFSA instructions refer these students to a postsecondary school's financial aid office for more information.

Questions 11 and 12 ask for the student's **state of legal residence**. The student's state of legal residence identifies the state agency to which information will be sent if the student has authorized such a release in Section H of the form. The state then may use this information to determine eligibility for state student aid programs. The student's state is also used in the EFC calculation to determine the appropriate allowance for state and other taxes paid by that state's residents. For a dependent student, the state of legal residence is usually the state in which his or her parents live.

Questions 17 and 18 ask about a student's **marital status** because the treatment of a student's income and assets in the EFC calculation is directly affected by the student's marital status. Marital status cannot be projected—the student must report his or her marital status as of the date the application is completed.

Question 19 asks whether a student will have a **first bachelor's degree before July 1, 1996** because eligibility for Federal Pell Grants and Federal SEOGs is restricted to students who have not yet received bachelor's degrees. If the student answers "yes" to this question, a message saying a bachelor's degree has been received will be printed at the top of page one of the SAR or on the electronic filing results.

Section B "Education Background"

Purpose: *This section collects information on the educational background of a student and his or her parents. Some state agencies use this information to award grants and scholarships.*

Questions 20 and 21 ask whether a student has a high school diploma or a GED.

Questions 22 and 23 ask for the highest grade level completed by a student's father and mother. Father and mother in these questions mean the student's birth parents, adoptive parents, or legal guardian(s), but not stepparents or foster parents. Note that this definition of parents is unique to this question.

Section C "Your Plans"

Purpose: *Section C collects information on a student's college enrollment plans for the 1996-97 award year, intended course of study, and preference for types of aid. Information on the amount of veterans education benefits a student expects to receive is also collected in this section.*

Question 32 asks a student for his or her **grade level** for the 1996-97 school year. This question is used to establish the federal limits that apply to the amounts that can be borrowed by or for this student. High school seniors and persons who will be entering college for the first time should check "1st yr./never attended college." High school students who have taken college-level courses prior to graduating from high school should also answer "1st yr./never attended college."

Questions 33-35 ask a student to indicate what **types of aid**, in addition to grants, the student (and his or her parents) are interested in receiving. If students are not sure, they should answer "yes" to all three questions, and they will be considered for all types of aid that are available. Students can decline any aid they are later awarded that they do not want.

Question 37 asks about a *student's* (not the parents') dependents. If a student has no dependents, the question should be left blank.

Questions 38 and 39 request information about **veterans education benefits** that the student will receive. The law requires that education benefits offered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs be treated as a resource when determining the student's eligibility for the campus-based programs and as estimated financial assistance when determining the student's eligibility for need-based Direct Loans or Federal Family Education Loans. Because they are student financial aid, veterans education benefits are not used in the EFC calculation; they are collected in this section for the school to use when packaging aid. If an applicant receives veterans education benefits, the applicant must report the amount of monthly benefits that he or she expects to receive during the school year (from July 1, 1996 through June 30, 1997). Included in this section are benefits from Selective Reserve Pay (Montgomery GI Bill—Chapter 106), New GI Bill (Montgomery GI Bill—Chapter 30), Post-Vietnam Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) (Chapter 32), Vocational Rehabilitation (Chapter 31), REPS (Restored Entitlement Benefits for Survivors—Section 156), Educational Assistance Program (Chapter 107), and Dependents Educational Assistance Program (Chapter 35).

Section D "Student Status"

Purpose: *The questions in Section D determine whether a student is considered a dependent student or an independent student under the law. This section is important in determining a student's EFC under the federal need analysis formula. A student who files as an independent student does not report parental information on the FAFSA. A student's income and assets are always included in the EFC calculation. A financial aid administrator may override a student's dependency status in individual cases if he or she decides that a student should be considered an independent student, regardless of the answers to the questions in Section D.*

Independent Student Definition

Questions 40-45 ask a student whether he or she meets any of the criteria that would establish him or her as an independent student. A student is automatically considered independent if he or she meets at least one of the following criteria:

- the student was born before January 1, 1973;
- the student is a veteran of the U. S. Armed Forces (Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard);
- the student will be enrolled in a graduate or professional program (beyond a bachelor's degree) in 1996-97;
- the student is legally married on the date the student signs the application;
- the student is an orphan or a ward of the court (or has been a ward of the court until reaching the age of 18); or
- the student has legal dependents other than a spouse.

The instructions explain each criterion in greater detail. The student should **read these instructions carefully,** because they define some of the terms used, such as "veteran," "legally married", "orphan", and "legal dependent". Note in particular that the definition of veteran now includes students who attended one of the service academies. A student answering "yes" to any question in Section D will be classified as an independent student, even if the student is still living with his or her parents.

After Section D, the form asks for parental information and student/spouse information separately. An independent student is not required to fill out any parental information, although some aid programs for health professions study beyond the bachelor's degree may require the information.

A dependent student gives information about himself or herself in the **white areas** and about his or her parents in the **red areas**. The student and a parent must sign the FAFSA.

An independent student gives information only about himself or herself and about his or her spouse (if applicable) by filling out the **white areas** and **gray areas**. The student must sign the FAFSA.

Definition of "Parent"

The term "parent" is not restricted to a student's natural parents. There are several instances in which a person other than a student's natural parent is treated as the student's parent. If this person is considered a parent to the student (as defined by the list that follows), then the parental questions on the application must be answered as they apply to that person.

Adoptive Parent—is treated in the same manner as natural parents.

Foster Parent—is not treated as a student's parent.

Legal Guardian—is treated in the same manner as a natural parent, if he or she has been appointed by the court *and* if he or she has been directed by the court to use his or her financial resources to support the student. This legal relationship must continue beyond June 30, 1997. If a student is living with his or her grandparents, the same principle applies. Unless the grandparents have adopted the student or are the student's court-appointed legal guardians and are required by the court to use their resources to support the student, the income of the grandparents cannot be reported on the FAFSA. See the FAFSA instructions for more information.

Stepparent—is treated in the same manner as a natural parent if the stepparent is married (as of the date of application) to a student's natural parent whose information will be reported on the FAFSA or if the student has been legally adopted by the stepparent. **There are no exceptions.** The federal need analysis system does not recognize prenuptial agreements. If the natural parent has died and the stepparent survives, then the student is independent (assuming the student is not dependent on the surviving natural parent), unless the stepparent legally adopted or is the legal guardian

of the student. Note that the stepparent's income information for the entire base year, 1995, must be reported even if the parent and stepparent were not married until after 1995.

In cases of death, separation, or divorce, a student must answer parental questions on the FAFSA as they apply to the surviving or responsible parent.

Death of Parent. If one, but not both, of the student's parents has died, the student will answer the parental questions on the basis of the surviving parent and will not report any financial information for the deceased parent on the FAFSA. If both the student's parents are dead when the student fills out the FAFSA, the student must answer "yes" to Question 44, making the student independent. If the last surviving parent dies after the FAFSA has been filed, the student must use the Student Aid Report (SAR) to update his or her dependency status and all other information as appropriate.

Divorce of Parents. If the student's parents are divorced or separated, the student should report the information of only one parent, the parent that he or she lived with the most during the past year. *It does not make a difference who claims the student as an exemption for tax purposes.* If the student did not live with either parent or lived equally with each parent, then the parental information must be provided for the parent from whom the student received the most financial support or the parent from whom the student received the most support the last time support was given.

Separation of Parents. If a separation has occurred, the same rules as for a divorce should be used to determine which parent's information must be reported. The separation need not be a legal separation—the student's parents may consider themselves separated when one of the parents has left the household for an indefinite period of time and no longer makes a substantial contribution to the finances of the household. However, if the parents still live in the same house, they would not be considered separated, and information for both parents must be reported.

Common-Law Marriage. If the student's parents are living together and have not been formally married but meet the criteria in their state for a common-law marriage, they should report their status as married on the application. If the state does not consider the situation to be a common-law marriage, then the parents should file as separated. Check with the appropriate state agency concerning the definition of a common-law marriage.

Section E "Household Information"

Purpose: *The number of family members reported in Section E determines the income protection allowance that will be subtracted from the family's income to account for basic living expenses. The number of family members in college directly affects the family's ability to contribute to the student's education costs. The student's EFC is divided by the number of family members in college.*

Household Size

The following persons may be included in the household size of an ***independent*** student:

- the ***student***;
- the ***student's spouse***, excluding a spouse not living in the household as a result of death, separation, or divorce;
- the ***student's dependent children***, if they received or will receive more than half of their support from the student and/or a member of the student's household, such as the student's spouse, between July 1, 1996 and June 30, 1997;
- the ***student's unborn child***, if that child will be born before or during the award year and the student and/or a member of the student's household will provide more than half of the child's support from the projected date of birth to the end of the award year (if there is a medical determination of a multiple birth, then all expected children can be included); and
- ***other persons***, if they live with the student *and* receive more than one-half of their support from the student and/or a member of the student's household at the time of application and will continue to receive that support for the entire 1996-97 award year (July 1, 1996 through June 30, 1997).

The following persons may be included in the household size of a ***dependent*** student:

- the ***student***;
- the ***student's parent(s)***, excluding a parent not living in the household as a result of death, separation, or divorce;

- the ***student's siblings***, if they received or will receive more than half of their support from the student's parent(s) between July 1, 1996 and June 30, 1997 or if they would be required to report parental information on the FAFSA;
- the ***student's children***, if they received or will receive more than half of their support from the student's parent(s) between July 1, 1996 and June 30, 1997;
- the student's parents' ***unborn child*** and/or the student's unborn child, if that child will be born before or during the award year (July 1, 1996 through June 30, 1997) and the student's parents will provide more than half of the child's support from the projected date of birth until the end of the award year (if there is a medical determination of a multiple birth, then all expected children can be included); and
- ***other persons***, if they live with *and* receive more than one-half of their support from the student's parent(s) at the time of application and will continue to receive that support for the entire 1996-97 award year (July 1, 1996 through June 30, 1997).

For the purpose of including children in the household size of a dependent student or an independent student, the "support" test is used (rather than a residency requirement) because there may be situations in which a parent supports a child who does not live with him or her, especially in cases where the parent is divorced or separated. In such cases, the parent who provides more than half of the child's support may claim the child in his or her household size. If the parent receives benefits (such as Social Security or AFDC payments) in the child's name, these benefits must be counted as parental support to the child.

Remember that financial information for a stepparent must be reported on the form, and that the stepparent must be included in household size.

Number in College

Questions 47 and 52 ask about the number of household members who will be in college during 1996-97. The number in college includes all those in the household who are enrolling in a postsecondary school for at least 6 credit hours in at least one term, or at least 12 clock hours per week. To be counted, a parent or other household member must be working toward a degree or certificate leading to a recognized education credential at a postsecondary school that is eligible to participate in any of the federal student aid programs. The student should always be included, even if he or she will be enrolled less than half time.

Section F "1995 Income, Earnings, and Benefits"

Purpose: *The EFC calculation compares a family's income from this section to the family's household size and other expenses to determine if the family has any discretionary income. If the family has discretionary income, a portion (and only a portion) of that income is included in the EFC.*

Section F collects information on the **base year income** of the parents (if the student is dependent) and of the student and spouse (if applicable), as well as income tax paid, tax-filing status, and the number of exemptions claimed. The base year for applicants for 1996-97 is the 1995 tax year. Each question gives the line reference to the 1995 IRS tax form for the correct figure. Estimated base year income for the tax year may be used if the family has not yet filed its 1995 tax return. However, if it turns out that the estimated information is incorrect, the student may have to make corrections on the SAR when the tax return is filed.

When completing Questions 53 or 65, a student and/or parent must indicate from which tax form they are getting the information for this section of the FAFSA. Sometimes a 1995 IRS Form 1040 is filed even though a 1040A or 1040EZ could have been filed. In such an instance, a student or parent should indicate eligibility to file a 1040A or 1040EZ by checking box A if a tax return has been filed or box C if a tax return has not been filed at the time the FAFSA is completed.

If a student and his or her parents or spouse, as applicable, don't file a tax return, or have not yet filed it, they still must report their earnings. In this case, W-2 forms and other such records should be used to answer the questions. Worksheet #1 on page 11 of the FAFSA instructions will help students calculate income.

Puerto Rico Tax Return

For the purpose of completing the FAFSA, a Puerto Rico tax return is considered to be an IRS Form 1040A or 1040EZ. The information from the Puerto Rico tax return should be used to complete the FAFSA.

Foreign Income

Income earned in a foreign country is treated in the same way as income earned in the United States, if taxes were paid to the central government of that country. A foreign tax return is considered to be an IRS Form 1040 for the purpose of completing the FAFSA. A student should report the value of the foreign income in U.S. dollars (using the exchange rate at the time of application) as the "Adjusted Gross Income " line item and as the "income earned from work" line item.

A student should also include the value of taxes paid to the foreign government on the "U.S. income tax paid" line item. (If the income earned in the foreign country was not taxed by that country, it should be reported as untaxed income.)

> ***Form 2555.*** In many cases, if a student or parent files a return with the Internal Revenue Service for a year in which foreign income was earned, a portion of the foreign income can be excluded on a Form 2555 for U.S. tax purposes. The figure reported on Line 43 of Form 2555 should be reported as "untaxed income" on the FAFSA. The final total for the Form 2555 must not be reported as untaxed income, because it contains other exclusions.

Income earned from work

The line items for income earned from work are used to calculate the Social Security tax allowances and the employment expense allowance. The income earned from work will also be used in the EFC calculation as an income factor when no Adjusted Gross Income is reported on the application.

Untaxed income and benefits

Questions 59-63 and Questions 71-75 include separate line items to collect information about "Untaxed income and benefits." Line items include Earned Income Credit, Social Security benefits, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC or ADC) payments, and child support because these are the most common forms of untaxed income and benefits. Note that if Social Security benefits are paid to parents on behalf of a student (because the student was under 18 years old at the time), those benefits are reported as the parent's income, not the student's income. If the Social Security check was made payable to the student, it would be reported as the student's income.

Students must be sure that Question 63 or 75, "other untaxed income and benefits," does not include any of the benefits already reported in previous line items. The line items for "other untaxed income and benefits" are used to report any benefits received by the student and parents that are not reported elsewhere on the form. Worksheet #2 on page 11 of the FAFSA instructions will help students calculate their untaxed income and benefits.

Any cash support received from a family member or third party should also be reported here as untaxed income. In some cases, the value of housing or payments on behalf of a student must be reported. Other items to report here include:

Income exclusions on IRS form. Two examples are the untaxed portion of capital gains and the interest and dividend exclusion. Even though, as a matter of public policy, they are not taxed by the federal government, both must be reported on the application for financial aid purposes, as they represent additional financial resources available to the family.

IRA/Keogh, pensions, and insurance settlements. If the family is eligible to exclude its payments to an IRA/Keogh from taxation, those payments are reported as untaxed income. If payments to other pension funds are not excluded for tax purposes, they would already be included in Adjusted Gross Income. A student should report money paid into tax-sheltered or deferred annuities (whether paid directly or withheld from earnings). In addition, any payments from a pension, annuity, or insurance settlement must be reported on the application, either as taxable income or untaxed income, as appropriate. The full amount of the distribution must be reported, whether it was a lump-sum or an annual distribution. The only exception to reporting pension distributions as income is when the pension distribution is "rolled over" to another retirement plan in the same tax year.

Benefits received on behalf of dependents. Any benefits received by the head of household on behalf of persons included in household size (Section E) must be reported as income to the head of the household. However, if members of the household, such as an uncle or grandmother, receive benefits in their own names, those benefits are not reported as income of the head of household. Remember that the student's siblings and "other persons" may not be included in household size if they receive in their own names more than half of their support through such benefits. Note that because student financial aid is not counted as income, tuition benefits a parent receives on behalf of a dependent (for example, from the parent's employer) are not included as untaxed income.

Underpayments and overpayments of benefits. The actual amount of benefits received for the year in question must be reported, even if that amount represents an underpayment or an overpayment that may be compensated for in the next year. This parallels the IRS treatment of overpayments of taxable income (such as salary) that must be reported and are taxed as any other income. However, if the underpayment or overpayment was adjusted in the same year, only the net amount received during that year would be reported.

Cash support to student. Any cash support that the student receives from a friend or a relative (other than the parent, if the student is dependent) must be reported as untaxed income. Cash support includes payments made on behalf of the student. For instance, if the student's aunt pays the student's rent or utility bill, the student must report those payments as untaxed income on the application.

Housing allowances. Housing allowances provided to the parents or student must be reported. This applies to compensation that some people, particularly clergy and military personnel, receive for their jobs. If the parent or student receives money to pay rent, he or she should list the amount of money received. If the parent receives use of a house or apartment, he or she should report the amount that he or she would pay to rent a comparable house or apartment (market value). Similarly, if the student received free room and board in the base year for a job that was not awarded as student financial aid, the student must report the value of the room and board as untaxed income.

There are some cases in which income and benefits received by the student or parent should not be reported on the application. Worksheet #2 lists types of income and benefits that should not be included as untaxed income; some of these are:

- ***Student financial aid.*** Student aid is not counted as income; it has no effect on the amount of a Federal Pell Grant the student receives and is already taken into account as resources for campus-based aid and as estimated financial assistance for Stafford.

  Food Stamps. Food stamps are not counted as untaxed income; they are regarded as "in-kind" assistance. Similarly, benefits from the following programs are not counted as untaxed income: Women, Infants, and Children Program, Food Distribution Program, Commodity Supplemental Food Program, National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, Summer Food Service Program, and Special Milk Program for Children.

Child care benefits. The worth of day-care services provided by the Child Care Program and the Social Services Block Grant Programs should not be reported, as they are a form of in-kind income. (Note: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides reimbursement for child care expenses incurred by welfare recipients through Aid to Families with Dependent Children [AFDC]). These benefits are reported on the application because the individual bills the state for the amount of child care costs incurred while on welfare and is reimbursed on that basis.)

Per capita payments to Native Americans. Per capita payments received in 1995 from the Per Capita Act or the Distribution of Judgment Funds Act should not be reported unless they exceed $2,000. Thus, if an individual payment were $1,500, it would not be reported on an application. However, if the payment were $2,500, the amount that exceeds $2,000—$500—would be reported as untaxed income.

Heating/fuel assistance. Exclude from consideration as income or resources any payments or allowances received under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act (LIHEA). (Note: Payments under the LIHEA are made through state programs that may have different names.)

Exclusions from Taxed Income:

Questions 64 and 76 ask for the total of income and benefits that are to be excluded from taxable income. Worksheet #3 on page 12 of the FAFSA instructions will help students calculate exclusions for amounts included in taxed income, such as work-study earnings. Because the items listed in this worksheet will be entered on the form and excluded from income in the calculation, the student should not subtract them from the income listed in Questions 56-58 or 68-70. These amounts should be calculated on the basis of what was received between January 1, 1995 and December 31, 1995, not what was received during the school year.

Grant and scholarship aid. Any grant and scholarship aid that was reported on the student's 1995 income tax form (because it was in excess of tuition, fees, books, and required supplies) should be reported as an exclusion.

Work-study earnings. Earnings from work are reported as income on the financial aid application. However, if those earnings are part of a financial aid package and are intended as need-based financial assistance to the student, they are also reported as an exclusion from taxed income.

National and Community Service living allowance and benefits. The National Community Service Act of 1993 allows young adults to earn postsecondary tuition funds by filling unmet community needs. Any living allowance or benefits received under this program should be reported as an exclusion.

Child support payments. Any child support payments made during 1995 by the student, spouse, or parent whose income is reported on the FAFSA should be reported as an exclusion.

Questions About Reporting Income

These are some of the most common questions about reporting income that are received at the Department's Federal Student Aid Information Center.

Why do you ask for income information from the year before the student goes to school?

Studies have consistently shown that verifiable income tax information from the base year (1995 for the 1996-97 award year) is more accurate than projected (1996) information when estimating how much the family will be able to contribute during the coming school year.

What should the student do if the family has special circumstances that aren't mentioned in the application?

Talk to the financial aid administrator. If a family's circumstances have changed from the base year (1995) due to loss of employment, loss of benefits, or death or divorce, the financial aid administrator may decide to adjust data elements used to calculate the student's EFC, which may increase the student's eligibility for student aid.

If the student lives with an aunt, uncle, or grandparent, should that relative's income be reported instead of parental information?

Only if the relative is the student's legal guardian, as defined on the FAFSA. The student can only be considered to be dependent on his or her parent(s) or guardian, and only parental/guardian information may be reported on the FAFSA. Any cash support given by relatives must be reported as untaxed income, but in-kind support (such as food and housing) from relatives is not reported.

What if the student lives with a girlfriend or boyfriend who pays the rent?

The student should not report any information for a friend or roommate unless they are actually married or are considered to have a common-law marriage under state law. The student must report any cash support given by the friend as untaxed income, but in-kind

support (such as food) from the friend is not reported. Note that the student would have to report the rent paid by the roommate as income if the student's name were on the lease and if the roommate were paying the rent on the student's behalf.

When is work considered student aid?

Generally, grants and scholarships are not considered to be taxed or untaxed income as long as they are applied to tuition, fees, books, and required supplies. If the student has an ROTC scholarship, a private scholarship, or any other kind of grant or scholarship, that scholarship or grant will be considered as an available resource by the financial aid office when packaging aid but will not be reported as income on the application.

In some cases, the student may have a job that was awarded as need-based financial aid. The income from that job should be reported in Question 64 as an exclusion from income. For income to be excluded, the job has to have been awarded to the student based on financial need. Thus, if the financial aid office gave the student a "Stay-In-School" job or a job as a resident advisor as a part of the student's aid package, the income from that job would be reported as an exclusion. On the other hand, if the student got a job that was not awarded as part of the student's financial aid package, the income from that job would not be reported in Question 64 as an exclusion. In addition, grants and scholarships that are reported on the tax return (because they are in excess of tuition, fees, books, and required supplies) should be reported in Question 64 as an exclusion. Worksheet #3 on page 12 of the FAFSA will help students answer Question 64.

What's the difference between cash support and in-kind support?

Cash support is support given either in the form of money or money that is paid on behalf of the student. Cash support must be reported as untaxed income on the application. Thus, if a friend or relative gives the student grocery money, it must be reported as untaxed income. If the friend or relative pays the electric bill for the student, or part of the student's rent, those payments must also be reported.

In-kind support usually takes the form of free food or housing that is provided to the family and is usually not reported on the application. So if the student is living rent-free with a friend or relative, the rental value is not reported as untaxed income unless the student's name is on the lease.

However, the application does require a student to report the value of housing that is provided to the family as compensation for a job. The most common example is free housing or a housing allowance provided to military personnel or clergy.

Simplified Needs Test

Purpose: *Page 7 of the instructions to the FAFSA includes worksheets A and B, which are used to determine if a student needs to fill out the information in Section G. The primary purpose of the "Simplified Needs Test" is to shorten the application process for some students.*

Basically, a dependent student does not have to fill out the asset information in Section G if the parents' income was less than $50,000 *and* the student and his or her parents were not required to use the IRS Form 1040 to file taxes. An independent student qualifies for the Simplified Needs Test and does not have to complete Section G when a student's (or a couple's) income is less than $50,000 *and* the student (and spouse) is not required to file an IRS Form 1040.

Independent students fill out Worksheet A; dependent students fill out Worksheet B. Question 1 on each worksheet asks whether the student, the student's spouse, or, for a dependent student, the student's parent was **required** to complete the 1040. If any one of these people was required to complete the 1040 (for example, to report business income), the student does not need to fill out the rest of the worksheet and **must** complete Section G. However, if the student, spouse, or parent completed the 1040 but could have filed the 1040A or 1040EZ (for example, if they filed through a tax preparer that only uses the 1040), the student must complete the rest of the worksheet to determine if he or she qualifies for the Simplified Needs Test.

Questions 2 and 3 on the worksheets ask for the income used to determine whether the student qualifies for the Simplified Needs Test. Tax-filers complete Question 2; non-tax-filers complete Question 3. These questions list the question numbers for information that should be copied from Section F. If the amount reported in Question 2 or 3 is $50,000 or more, the student **must** complete Section G.

The Simplified Needs Test will usually increase a student's eligibility for federal student aid programs because it does not include family assets. However, a student who qualifies for the Simplified Needs Test might need to complete Section G if he or she wants to be considered for certain types of student financial aid from the postsecondary school he or she will be attending, the state in which he or she is a legal resident, or the state in which the postsecondary school is located. The school or the appropriate state agency will inform students of its eligibility criteria.

Section G "Asset Information"

Purpose: *The purpose of Section G is to determine if a family's assets are substantial enough to support a contribution toward a student's cost of education. Note that only the net asset value is counted in the need analysis. Any debts against these assets are reported in this section, and they are subtracted from the value of the assets when the EFC is calculated. After the net asset value has been determined, an asset protection allowance is subtracted from the parents' assets (a student's assets are not reduced by the asset protection allowance in the EFC formula unless the student is independent). Only the amount of the assets that exceeds the allowance is expected to be available for meeting education expenses, and only a portion of those available assets will be assessed in the need analysis formula.*

To make the application process easier, if a family qualifies for the Simplified Needs Test it does not have to report assets to be considered for federal student financial aid. However, state agencies, private scholarship groups, postsecondary schools, or other groups can require asset information from applicants using the FAFSA if the applicants wish to also apply for nonfederal student aid with the FAFSA.

An asset is defined as property owned by the family that has an exchange value. Possessions such as a car, a stereo, clothes, or furniture are not reported as assets on the financial aid application.

✔ ***Note that the family's principal place of residence is not reported as an asset. This includes a family farm if the farm is the principal place of residence and the family claimed on Schedule F of the tax return that it "materially participated in the farm's operation."***

Ownership of an Asset

There are several situations where the ownership of an asset may be divided or contested:

Part ownership of asset. If the parent or student only has part ownership of an asset, only that part should be reported. The general rule is that the value of an asset and debts against it should be divided by the number of people who share ownership, unless the share of the asset is determined by the amount invested or the terms of the arrangement specify some other means of division.

Contested ownership. Assets should not be reported if the ownership is being contested. For instance, if the parents are separated and they may not sell or borrow against jointly owned property that is being contested, the responsible parent would not list any value for the property or any debts against it. However, if the ownership of the property is not being contested, the property would be reported as an asset. If ownership of an asset is resolved after the initial application is filed, the student is not required to update this information.

Lien against asset. If there is a lien or imminent foreclosure against the asset, the asset would still be reported until the party holding the lien or making the foreclosure has completed legal action to take possession of the asset.

Other Real Estate and Investments Value

"Investments" include a wide range of investment items, including trust funds (see page 62), money-market funds, certificates of deposit, stocks, bonds, other securities, installment and land sale contracts, commodities, and precious and strategic metals. Investments also include money loaned out by the student or parent (the unpaid principal would be reported as an asset). "Real Estate" includes second or summer homes or rental properties owned by the student or parents. Report the value of these properties and how much is owed on them as of the date the application is signed.

Rental properties. Sometimes the applicant will claim that rental properties represent a business. Generally, rental properties must be reported under Real Estate rather than as Business Assets. To be reported as a business, a rental property would have to be part of a formally recognized business. (Usually such a business would provide additional services, such as regular cleaning, linen, or maid service.)

Business. Report the current market value of a business. Include the value of land, buildings, machinery, equipment, inventories, and the like. Don't include the family's primary home, even if it is part of the business. Then write in what is owed on the business, including the unpaid mortgage and related debts.

Investment Farm. When reporting the current market value of an investment farm, the student should include the value of the land, buildings, machinery, equipment, livestock, and inventories. The farm debt reported should include the unpaid mortgage and related debts, as well as any loan for which farm assets were used as collateral. As noted earlier, a family farm shouldn't be reported as an asset.

✔ ***Note that when current market value for a business/farm is reported, it must be the amount the business/farm could sell for as of the date of the application. Also, if the student or parent is not the sole owner of the business/farm, only his or her share of the value and the debt should be reported.***

Take-back mortgages. In a "take-back" mortgage, the seller takes back a portion of the mortgage from the buyer and arranges for the buyer to repay that portion of the mortgage to the seller. For IRS purposes, the seller must report the interest portion of any payments received from the buyer on Schedule B of IRS Form 1040. Therefore, if an amount is reported on this line of the tax return, the family probably has an asset that should be reported on the financial aid application.

The asset value to be reported is the value of the take-back mortgage. Note that there would be no debt reported against this asset. For instance, if the family sold its house for $60,000 and had a take-back mortgage of $20,000, the family should report $20,000 under "Other real estate and investments value" on the application. This amount will decrease each year, depending on how much of the principal the buyer paid back that year. (This discussion would also apply to other forms of seller financing of the sale of a home or other property.)

Trust Funds and Tuition Prepayment Plans

Trust funds in the name of a specific individual should be reported as that person's asset on the application. In the case of divorce or separation, where the trust is owned jointly and ownership is not being contested, the property and the debt are equally divided between the owners for reporting purposes, unless the terms of the trust specify some other method of division.

As a general rule, the present value of the trust must be reported as an asset, even if the beneficiary's access to the trust is restricted. If the grantor of a trust has voluntarily placed restrictions on the use of the trust, then the trust would be reported in the same manner as a

trust that did not have any specific restrictions. The way in which the trust must be reported varies according to whether the student (or dependent student's parent) receives or will receive the interest income, the trust principal, or both.

Interest only. If a student, spouse, or parent receives only the interest from the trust, any interest received in the base year must be reported as income. Even if the interest accumulates in the trust and is not paid out during the year, the person who will receive the interest must report an asset value for the interest he/she will receive in the future. The present value of the interest the person will receive while the trust exists can usually be calculated by the trust officer. This value represents the amount a third person would be willing to pay to receive the interest income that the student (or parent) will receive from the trust in the future.

Principal only. The student, spouse, or parent who will receive only the trust principal must report the present value of his or her right to the trust principal as an asset. For example, if the principal is $10,000 and it reverts to a dependent student's parents when the trust ends in 10 years but the student is receiving the interest earned from the trust, the present value of the parents' rights to the trust principal must be reported as a parental asset. The present value of the principal is the amount that a third person would pay at the present for the right to receive the principal 10 years from now (basically, the amount that one would have to deposit now to receive $10,000 in 10 years, including the accumulated interest). Again, the present value can be calculated by the trust officer.

Both principal and interest. If a student, spouse, or parent receives both the interest and the principal from the trust, the present value of both interest and principal would be reported, as described above. If the trust is set up in such a manner that the interest accumulates within the trust until the trust ends, the beneficiary should report as an asset the present value of the funds (both interest and principal) that he or she is expected to receive when the trust ends.

If a trust has been restricted by court order, it would not be reported as an asset. An example of such a restricted trust is one set up by court order to pay for future surgery for the victim of a car accident.

✔ ***Note that the Michigan Education Trust and all similar tuition prepayment plans are excluded from being reported as an asset on the FAFSA. This is a change from previous policy.***

Excluded Assets

Some assets are not to be reported on the financial aid application.

Pensions and whole life insurance. Pensions are not counted as assets for application purposes. Of course, when the income from a pension is distributed to the beneficiary, either as a lump-sum or in incremental distribution, the income would be reported. The cash value or built-up equity of a life insurance policy (often referred to as a "whole-life" policy) is not reported as an asset.

Excluded assets for Native American students. The law explicitly excludes reporting any property received under the Per Capita Act or the Distribution of Judgment Funds Act (25 United States Code 1401, et seq.), the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 United States Code 1601, et seq.), or the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (25 United States Code 1721, et seq.).

Section H "Releases and Signatures"

Purpose: *This section permits a student to list up to six schools that he or she is interested in attending. The Department will send the student's information to all the schools listed in Section H. Students should not write in the name of a school if they don't want it to receive their application information. Students should list each school's Title IV code.*

Questions 92-103 ask a student to list up to six schools to which he or she wants the FAFSA data and results sent. They also ask a student to select a housing code that best describes the type of housing he or she expects to live in for each of the schools listed.

For students who are applying to more than six schools, there are several ways to make sure all the schools receive their data.

1. When the student submits the FAFSA, he or she can request up to eight additional copies of the SAR by attaching a letter to that effect to the form. (Any other information the student puts in this letter will not be processed.) The student can also photocopy the SAR or request duplicates. The student can then send copies of the SAR to schools. (Note that a photocopy of the SAR cannot serve as a final documentation of eligibility.) Schools not listed on the SAR will receive the data only when the student gives them a copy of the SAR; they will not receive the data directly from the CPS.

2. The student may list six schools on the application, wait for the SAR, and then correct the SAR by replacing some or all of the original six schools with other schools. The student may also send a letter to the FAFSA processor requesting changes in schools; in this case, all six schools from the original application will be replaced with the schools the student lists in the letter. Note: Other corrections made at the same time this is done will not be sent to the first set of schools that are replaced with new schools.

3. If a school that is not listed on the SAR participates in EDE, that school may use the student's PIN number (printed on the SAR) to get the student's data electronically. That school would then replace one of the six schools listed in the original application.

The student should not send a letter listing more than six schools to the FAFSA processor after the SAR has been received and should not send additional FAFSAs listing different schools to a different FAFSA processor.

The CPS will send data to only six schools at a time for one student. For example, if the student originally listed six schools on the application, and then replaced all six with new schools by changing the SAR, only the second six schools would get data from this correction. Furthermore, if the student then corrected the new SAR and changed all six schools again, only the third set of schools would get the corrected data. The first and second sets of schools would not receive the corrected data.

Keep in mind that for a college to receive a student's data, the student must list the college's name and Title IV institution code or address. The FAFSA will be processed faster if the student writes in the Title IV code and the name of the college. These codes are not in the FAFSA instructions; they are provided in the Title IV Institution Code List. The Department sends this Title IV code list to high schools, colleges, and public libraries each fall around the same time the FAFSAs are distributed.

Although parental information must be provided for a dependent student, a high school counselor or a postsecondary school's financial aid administrator may sign the application in place of the parent(s) if:

- the parent(s) is not currently in the United States *and* cannot be contacted by normal means;
- the current address of the parent(s) is not known; or
- the parent(s) has been determined physically or mentally incapable of providing a signature.

The signature of a counselor or aid administrator serves as a mechanism to get the application through the processing system. The counselor or aid administrator must provide his or her title in parentheses next to his or her signature and briefly state the reason (only one reason is needed) why he or she is signing for the parent(s). Also, if both parents are unable to sign the application, the counselor or aid administrator need only sign once in place of both parents. The counselor or aid administrator assures a minimum level of credibility in the data submitted. However, the counselor or aid administrator does not assume any responsibility or liability in this process. If the financial aid office finds any inaccuracies in the information reported, the student would be directed to send the SAR through the normal correction process.

Section I "Preparer's Use Only"

The law requires that if anyone other than a student, the student's spouse, or the student's parents prepared the application, then the preparer must write in his or her name, the firm/company name (if applicable), the firm/company address, and the firm/company's Employer Identification Number (EIN) as assigned by the Internal Revenue Service or the preparer's Social Security Number.

Question 110 requires the preparer to sign the form.

High school counselors, financial aid administrators, and others who help students with their applications by actually filling out line items on the form or dictating responses to items on the form are considered preparers. Preparers must complete this section, even if they are not paid for their services.

Special supplement: getting disadvantaged students into college

In recent years, increasing attention has been given to "at-risk" students—students who have the aptitude for postsecondary education but, for one reason or another, choose not to continue their studies beyond high school or drop out before completing high school.

Despite the significant amount of need-based aid that is available for high school students to continue their education, recent studies show that students and parents from low-income families are less likely to be informed about student financial aid than those from relatively well-off families. Clearly, the problem of access cannot be solved solely by making financial aid available to disadvantaged students. Rather, the solution depends on goals that are established and choices that are made long before the last year of high school.

One of the primary responsibilities of the school counselor is to help students make the transition from secondary school to college or work. This supplement offers suggestions for assisting in that process by addressing a critical problem—misinformation and lack of information about postsecondary options and financial aid.

Three Myths About Financial Aid

There isn't enough financial aid for students like me.

Many students and parents have the impression that the budget for the federal student aid programs has been severely reduced. In fact, funding for these programs has grown steadily. Federal student aid programs alone will provide roughly $28 billion in grants, loans, and work-study assistance to more than 6 million students. While it's true that even this much aid cannot meet the full financial need of all students, the students with the greatest financial need have the best chance of receiving assistance.

Only students with good grades get financial aid.

Many students think that financial aid is awarded on the basis of grades. While a high grade point average is certainly desirable and will help a student get into a good school, most of the federal student aid programs do not take a student's grades into consideration. Provided a student maintains satisfactory academic progress in his or her program of study, federal student aid will help a student with an average academic record complete his or her education.

You have to be a minority to get financial aid.

Funds from the federal student aid programs are awarded on the basis of financial need. These funds are NOT awarded on the basis of race, creed, or gender. The financial aid applications for these programs don't even collect such information about the applicant.

The Messages

Stay in school.

Promote the benefits of education, emphasizing the financial rewards. Studies show a college graduate earns more money in his or her lifetime than someone with a high school diploma. The economic realities of the job market for noncollege graduates or those with no technical training remain dismal.

Aid is available.

Students should be encouraged to apply for aid—counselors can help to "demystify" the process by involving parents whenever possible. Although poor academic performance in high school and on standardized tests is generally the most serious obstacle to expanding access to college, financial aid can effectively reduce the economic barriers. Federal, state, and institutional aid should all be explored.

Not everyone goes to school the same way.

Sometimes high school students may assume that further schooling means four years of full-time study at a residential college. Today students can plan on a wide range of postsecondary options, including six-month programs at career schools, two-year degree programs at community and junior colleges in the commuting area, as well as the traditional four-year programs at colleges and universities. Part-time, full-time, evening, and day classes—the choices are many and varied.

Reaching "At-Risk" Students

Many high schools, postsecondary schools, private organizations, and government agencies around the United States have cooperated in developing early intervention programs. The following list of suggestions is drawn from some of these existing early intervention programs. You can find out more about these programs from the sources listed under Further Information and Publications on page 76.

Establish a timetable of age-sequenced activities.

Studies show that the earlier and more often at-risk students are reached, the better they understand the choices they can make. Eighth and ninth graders are often forming career aspirations and need guidance in making decisions about high school courses. Tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders should look at the choices for postsecondary education, discuss their financial situation with parents and counselors, participate in pre-college summer programs if available, take the SAT or ACT, apply for aid, and select a school. Every student should be encouraged to take the SAT or ACT and apply for federal financial aid, even if they do not plan to enroll in a college or vocational program immediately after high school.

Involve parents as well as students.

Arrange for evening or weekend information sessions for the convenience of working parents. Parents need to understand not only college admissions requirements and the rudiments of student financial aid, but also about the high school courses needed for various postsecondary options. Information on financial planning and how to gather and use information about postsecondary options is necessary for all parents, but it is most important for parents who have no postsecondary experience themselves.

Establish a tutoring and/or mentoring program.

Setting up a tutoring and/or mentoring program in your school using local college students can be very valuable. A U.S. Department of Education study identified more than 1,700 tutoring and mentoring programs operating in 921 colleges and universities involving partnerships with elementary and secondary schools. These projects have shown positive effects not only on the test scores, grades, and overall academic performance of the tutored students, but also on their self-esteem and self-confidence. The participating college or university may be able to pay its students from the Federal Work-Study Program.

Provide first-hand information.

There are a variety of ways to help students visualize the idea of postsecondary education. Visiting an actual campus is probably the most effective way for them to get a feel for the college experience. However, there are many other ways to provide informative and motivational experiences, such as attending college fairs, meeting with college admission representatives, organizing parents for tours of campuses, and inviting recent college graduates to talk to students. Students need to discuss the things that are keys to success in postsecondary education, such as planning to meet off-campus expenses and allowing enough time for study. Students' fears and unrealistic expectations can be overwhelming, especially for those who are first generation college students.

Provide academic counseling.

The heart of early intervention is academic preparation and proper course selection. Studies show that many students who might be admitted to postsecondary schools are not taking courses at the high school level that would prepare them for further study. Students should be counseled, regardless of their postsecondary plans, to pursue a challenging program of study in high school. Even those students who don't go on to college or career training after high school may change their minds later on. It's also a good idea for high school counselors to work with middle school counselors to ensure that students have the opportunity to take courses that will prepare them for postsecondary education. It's all part of helping students keep their options open.

Develop cooperative programs with local postsecondary schools.

In some areas, secondary schools and neighboring colleges encourage students to stay in school and plan ahead by offering them financial incentives. For instance, high school students in one locality are encouraged to sign a contract in which they promise to take certain preparatory courses, attend school regularly, and make good grades. A student who fulfills the contract doesn't have to pay tuition and fees at the local community college.

Existing Programs

TRIO If you do not already do so in your school, it may be possible to participate in one of the TRIO programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. Established in 1965, the primary purpose of the TRIO programs is to prepare disadvantaged students for successful entry into, retention in, and completion of postsecondary education. All of the TRIO funds are awarded through a competitive discretionary grant process.

- ✔ ***Upward Bound*** - prepares eligible students between the ages of 13 and 19 for college. Sponsored mainly by postsecondary institutions, the services provide remedial instruction, career awareness activities, postsecondary and financial aid counseling, and cultural activities.
- ✔ ***Talent Search*** - serves students between the ages of 11 and 27 who have completed the fifth grade and are potential first-generation college students. Talent Search projects may be sponsored by secondary schools, community-based organizations, and postsecondary institutions.
- ✔ ***Student Support Services*** - provides on-campus support programs for low-income, first-generation, or disabled students. Programs may be sponsored only by postsecondary institutions.

Private A wide range of private programs that guarantee college tuition have been established in recent years and may be available for your students. The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) identified four main types of programs in its report "Promising Practice: Private Programs Guaranteeing Student Aid for Higher Education":

- ✔ ***Sponsorship programs***, begun either by individuals or organizations, promise tuition for postsecondary education to students who are successful during their kindergarten through high school years. The programs often target elementary school students and provide extensive support services throughout their school years.

- ✔ ***"Last dollar" programs*** help high school students apply for student aid and promise to make up the difference between the aid received and the cost of attendance.
- ✔ ***University-based programs*** often enroll students as early as middle school/junior high school. These programs may guarantee students admission, tuition, and mentoring services.
- ✔ ***"Pay for grades"*** programs typically offer tuition reduction in exchange for high grades. These programs have not been as successful as the others, says GAO, because they offer few support services to students.

If you would like to order the GAO report, you may receive one free copy by calling (202) 512-6000 and requesting document number PEMD-90-16.

Further Information and Publications

The following is a sampling of some of the information resources that are available:

✔ For information on the TRIO Programs, contact the Division of Student Services, Higher Education Programs, Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-4725.

✔ The National Association of College Admission Counselors has a number of useful publications. To order any of its publications, contact NACAC Publications/Media, 1631 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2818; (703) 836-2222, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Eastern Time. Orders under $10 must be prepaid. Quantity discounts are available. Some of the publications are:

A Guide to the College Admission Process, a 68-page guide that offers a step-by-step approach to college admission. The cost is $4 per copy.

Frontiers of Possibility, a report which addresses the development and expansion of college counseling in high schools. The cost is $12 per copy.

Guide for Parents, a brochure for parents of upper elementary grade students and middle school students that addresses college admission and financial aid. A free copy in English or Spanish is available.

How Counselors Help College Bound Students, a free brochure that details how school counselors, college admission counselors and financial aid counselors help students in the school to college transition.

Parents' Guide to the College Admission Process, a 47-page booklet that guides parents through the important aspects of the school-to-college transition. The cost is $4 per copy.

✔ ***College 101: 12 Steps to College,*** a guide for high school students. The information ranges from how to choose a college to how to find financial aid. The cost is $10 per copy. It can be ordered from the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 4204 Gardendale Street, Suite 216, San Antonio, TX 78229; (210) 692-3805 or (210) 692-0823 (fax).

✔ ***One on One: A Guide for Establishing Mentoring Programs***, a "how-to" guide for establishing or expanding mentoring programs that includes suggestions for needs assessment and developing goals and recruiting mentors. 50 pages. Copies are available by writing the U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, Room 4168, 600 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202.

✔ ***Occupational Outlook Quarterly,*** U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Published four times a year, the OOQ provides up-to-date information on the employment outlook in various fields, occupational staffing patterns, and national data on educational attainment and job growth. Order from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954; (202) 512-1800. Price is $9.50 for one year or $3 for one copy.

Sample Handouts

We have included several handouts on the following pages that may be photocopied and used to provide basic information about student aid and postsecondary opportunities to students and parents.

CHOOSING A SCHOOL CAREFULLY

6 TIPS

Getting training after high school may help you get a better-paying job, doing the work you like. But going to school is a big investment. You're investing your time. Chances are you'll also have to invest your own money, or take out a student loan to go to school. So you need to be sure that you're making the right choice.

1 Talk to your Counselor

Your school counselor is the first stop for information about the many options available to you. Counselors can help you focus on your own needs and goals, and will have all kinds of information about different kinds of schools. Your counselor can also help you prepare materials, such as letters of recommendation, that the school may ask for.

2 Shop Around

Be selective — contact more than one school. If you're looking for vocational training, check the Yellow Pages under "Schools" for phone numbers. If your area has a community college, call the admissions office and find out what kinds of training the college offers.

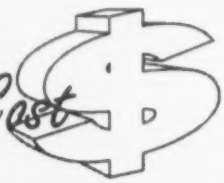
3 Visit the School

Call the school and schedule a visit, preferably while classes are being taught. Try to get a feel for the school during your visit. Make sure that you are comfortable with the facilities, the equipment, and the teachers.

4 Don't be Afraid to Ask!

A good school will be happy to answer your questions about its programs. Ask the school about its students: How many of its students graduate? How many get jobs because of the training they received? Ask the school what kind of job placement services it offers.

5 Check the Cost



Make sure the school gives you a clear statement of the tuition and fees it charges. Remember that any financial aid you get will first be applied to the tuition and fee charges. If there's any money left over, the school will give it to you to help pay for things like food and rent.

6 Call these Numbers

Call your local Better Business Bureau to find out if there have been any complaints about the school. Call the Student Aid Information Center's toll-free number (1-800-4 FED AID) if you have any questions about your financial aid at the school. The Center can also tell you the school's default rate for federal student loans. (The Center is part of the U.S. Department of Education.)

If you're thinking about going to college or to a trade school, you may be wondering —

AM I ELIGIBLE FOR STUDENT AID?

Generally, that depends on your financial need, which is determined by the information you give on the aid application. But you can get a quick estimate of your Federal Pell and Federal Stafford Loan eligibility by looking up your **family size** and **family income** on the chart below.

Pell + Stafford	family size 1	2	3	4	5+
family income: $10,000 or less	$3,025	$4,815	$4,965	$4,965	$4,965
$10,000 to $20,000	$2,625	$3,815	$4,315	$4,415	$4,515
$20,000 to $30,000	$1,456	$2,625	$3,615	$3,915	$4,015
$30,000 to $40,000	$0	$2,625	$2,625	$3,415	$3,815
$40,000 to $50,000	$0	$2,625	$2,625	$2,625	$3,115

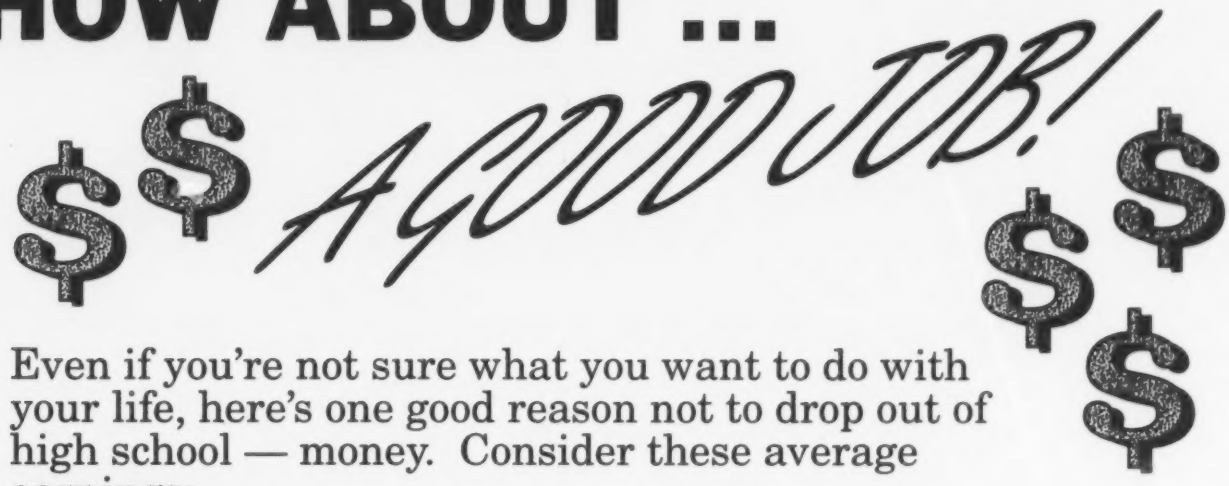
The fine print: You are responsible for paying back the Stafford Loan. You will receive less than the amount shown on the chart if you attend a low-cost school, if you attend only part of an academic year, or have sizable assets. Also, you will be expected to contribute some of your savings towards school costs.

To find your **family size,** include yourself, your spouse (if you are married), any children, and anyone who gets more than half of their support from you. If you are dependent on your parents, include them, your brothers and sisters, and anyone supported by your parents.

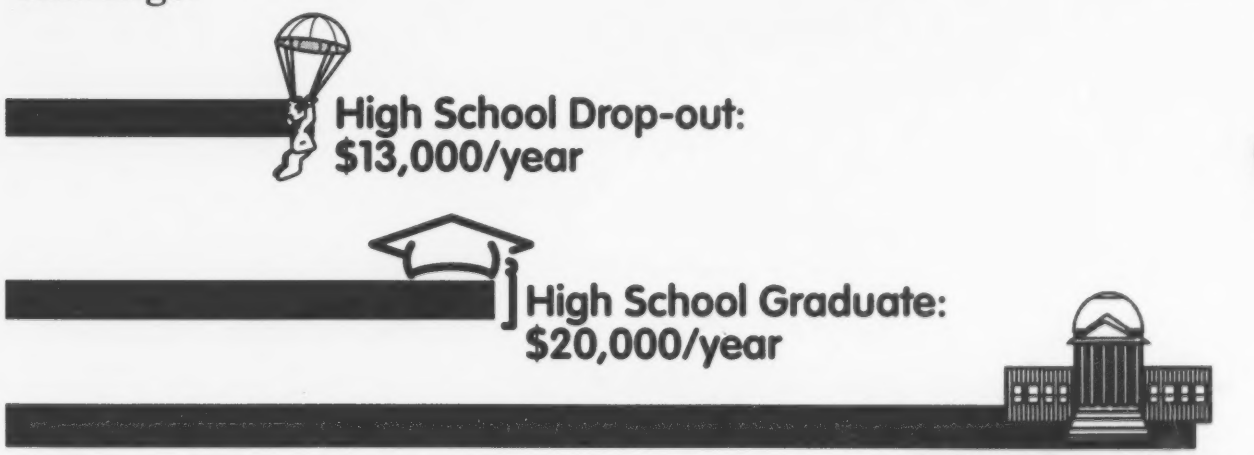
To find your **family income,** add up the amount that you make from work, and any untaxed income or benefits that you receive. If you're married, include your spouse's income and benefits. If you're dependent, also include your parents' income and benefits.

• For further information, contact the Student Information Center at 1-800-4 FED AID •

WHY STAY IN SCHOOL? HOW ABOUT ...



Even if you're not sure what you want to do with your life, here's one good reason not to drop out of high school — money. Consider these average earnings:



Sometimes it's hard to stay in school if you think you need to be working to earn money. But it is true that you'll have a better chance of finding and keeping a *good* job, and you'll earn *more,* if you finish high school.

If you're having trouble staying in school, talk to your guidance counselor. Don't be afraid to ask for help. It pays to stay in school!

CHOOSING A CAREER

❶ Learn about yourself ...

Values ... What is important to you? Do you like working with others, or do you prefer working by yourself? Do you like working with your hands? Do you prefer variety or a familiar routine?

Interests ... What appeals to you? What do you enjoy? Do you like solving problems? What gets your attention?

Aptitude ... What are you good at? Are you good with words? Do you have artistic talent? Can you fix things? Talk with your guidance counselor or a teacher for advice. Ask your guidance counselor about taking an aptitude test or interest inventory.

❷ Consider how much training you will need for the career you're interested in ...

High school diploma: cashier, receptionist, salesperson, security guard, telephone operator, waiter/waitress ... **Special career training:** auto technician, firefighter, machinist, medical technician, police officer, barber/cosmetologist ... **College degree:** accountant, counselor, engineer, nurse, pilot, teacher ... **Graduate degree:** college professor, dentist, lawyer, veterinarian, judge.

❸ Talk to people who are working in that field ...

People who like their jobs (and even people who don't) are usually happy to talk about them. It's helpful to ask the "what's good and bad about this job" questions. Ask them how they learned their trade. There are many sources of career and job outlook information available — go to your public library or your guidance counselor. READ AND EXPLORE!

BE AN INFORMED CONSUMER — KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

Tuition and Fees

If you're enrolling in a community college or 4-year college, you will probably get a tuition and fee bill before each term (semester or quarter) begins, and your aid will be paid each term.

If you're enrolling at a vocational school, the school will usually charge you for tuition and fees for the entire educational program at the beginning of the program. However, your financial aid award will usually be divided into at least two payments. The first payment is made at the beginning of the program, and the second payment is made after you've finished one-half of the program.

Most schools will use your financial aid award to pay the tuition and fees charge first. Then, if there's any amount left over, the school must give it to you to help you pay your living expenses.

Loans

Even if you qualify for a full Federal Pell Grant, you may have to get a student loan to go to school.

Before you borrow, make sure you can afford to pay it back. Either the school or the lender must give you a repayment schedule that explains how much your loan payments will be, and when you have to start making the payments.

Remember that you have to pay back the loan, even if you drop out of the school, or don't find a job after you graduate.

Refund Policy

It's important to find out if you can get a refund if you drop out of school before you get your degree or certificate. Of course, no one plans on dropping out, but it does happen. You may have personal reasons for dropping out, such as a family illness. Or you may decide that the school's program isn't right for you.

Every school that gives federal student aid must have a written refund policy, and must give you a copy of that policy if you request it.

If student aid was used to pay your costs at the school, the whole refund or a part of your refund will probably go to the aid programs. Usually, the refund will first be made to your lender, if you took out a loan. This will reduce the amount of money that you have to repay.

So it is in your best interest to let the school know exactly when you dropped out or plan to withdraw — it may reduce your debt.

Enrollment Contracts

Read the enrollment contract carefully before you sign it. The contract explains what the school will give you for your money. A representative of the school may promise you things that are not in the contract, such as help finding a job. If the school's representative makes you a promise, ask them to write that promise on the contract, and sign and date it. If necessary, the school can add a separate sheet of paper to the contract, with the title "Addendum to [name of contract." *A promise is usually not enforceable in court unless it is in writing.*

For further information, contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4 FED AID.
U.S. Department of Education

Appendix A-Sources of Additional Information

For information on any federal student financial aid programs discussed in this handbook, you or your students may call the—

Federal Student Aid Information Center

1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)—a toll-free number

TDD (1-800-730-8913)—a toll-free number for the hearing impaired

9 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Eastern Time), Monday through Friday

The **Information Center** provides the following services:

- helping complete the federal student aid application form (the FAFSA);
- explaining the SAR and how to make corrections;
- checking on whether a school participates in federal student aid programs;
- explaining who is eligible for federal student aid;
- explaining how federal student aid is awarded and paid;
- explaining the verification process; and
- mailing requested publications.

To check on the status of a financial aid application or to request a duplicate SAR, call the **Information Center** at **319-337-5665**.

Please note that the Information Center cannot accept collect calls.

The Information Center is not able to—

- make policy;
- expedite the federal student aid application process;
- discuss a student's federal student aid file with an unauthorized person;
- change a student's file without written, signed authorization; or
- influence an individual school's financial aid policies.

If you or a student have reason to suspect fraud, waste, or abuse involving federal student aid funds, you should call the toll-free hotline of the U.S. Department of Education's Inspector General's office at

1-800-MIS-USED (1-800-647-8733)

A student's initial sources of information on federal student aid should be ***Funding Your Education*** **(see the annotated listing that follows),** the instructions in the federal aid application booklet, high school counselors, and postsecondary school financial aid administrators.

If you or your students have access to the World Wide Web (WWW) through the Internet or an online service, you may be interested in the Department's WWW site. This site is under development; it currently provides general information about the Department, and access to some of the Department's publications. The address is:

http://www.ed.gov/

Currently, both the ***1995-96 Student Guide*** and ***Preparing Your Child for College*** are available at this address. We expect to have ***Funding Your Education*** and other publications (including the ***1996-97 Student Guide***) available soon.

Funding Your Education—This is a free booklet giving federal student financial aid application information and describing the U.S. Department of Education's major financial aid programs. Individual copies are available from:

Federal Student Aid Information Center
P.O. Box 84
Washington, DC 20044

Expected Family Contribution (EFC) Formulas 1996-97—A free booklet explaining the need analysis formula enacted by Congress that produces the EFC; it also contains worksheets. It is available from:

Federal Student Aid Information Center
P.O. Box 84
Washington, DC 20044

School Shopping Tips—This is a free guide to choosing a school carefully. It suggests specific things to look for when choosing a school and a career. It is available from:

Federal Student Aid Information Center
P.O. Box 84
Washington, DC 20044

Higher Education Opportunities for Minorities and Women—Annotated Selections 1994 Edition—Although designed primarily for minorities and women, many of the opportunities listed in this free booklet are for all students. In some instances, information is provided on loans, scholarships, and fellowships. It is available from:

Federal Student Aid Information Center
P.O. Box 84
Washington, DC 20044

AWARE Early Awareness Software—A free PC-based interactive software program designed to provide early information to middle school and high school students about postsecondary education opportunities, attendance costs, and the availability of financial aid. Indicate whether you want to receive a 5 1/4" diskette or a 3 1/2" diskette. It is available from:

U.S. Department of Education
Application and Pell Processing Systems Division - AWARE
ROB-3, Room 4621 MS 5454
600 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Need a Lift?—The 43rd edition (1994 issue) of this publication contains a survey of educational opportunities, loans, scholarships, and careers. It is available for $3 from:

The American Legion
National Emblem Sales
P.O. Box 1050
Indianapolis, IN 46206

Preparing Your Child for College: A Resource Book for Parents—A free booklet that provides information on academic and financial preparation necessary to attend college. It is available from:

Consumer Information Center
Department 510-A
Pueblo, CO 81009
(719) 948-3334

Make it Happen!—A step-by-step guide to college for students in grades 8 through 12. It is available for $1 for a single copy (multiple copies require an additional charge) from:

Higher Education Information Center
Youth Programs Department
330 Stuart Street, Suite 500
Boston, MA 02116
(617) 426-0681, ext. 239

Appendix B-Directory of State Agencies

Listed below for each state are the agencies responsible for administering the SSIG and Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Programs in that state.

ALABAMA

SSIG Program:

Alabama Commission on Higher Education
3465 Norman Bridge Road, Suite 205
Montgomery, Alabama 36105-2310
TEL: (334) 281-1998

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
Gordon Persons Office Building
50 North Ripley Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-3901
TEL: (205) 242-8082

ALASKA

SSIG Program:

Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
3030 Vintage Boulevard
Juneau, Alaska 99801-7109
TEL: (907) 465-2962

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
Goldbelt Place
801 West 10th Street, Suite 200
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1894
TEL: (907) 465-8715

ARIZONA

SSIG Program:

Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education
2020 North Central Avenue, Suite 275
Phoenix, Arizona 85004-4503
TEL: (602) 229-2531

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
1535 West Jefferson
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
TEL: (602) 542-2147

ARKANSAS

SSIG Program:

Arkansas Department of Higher Education
114 East Capitol
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201-3818
TEL: (501) 324-9300

Byrd Program:

Arkansas Department of Education
4 State Capitol Mall, Room 304A
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201-1071
TEL: (501) 682-4474

CALIFORNIA

SSIG Program:

California Student Aid Commission
P.O. Box 510845
Sacramento, California 94245-0845
TEL: (916) 445-0880

Byrd Program:

California Student Aid Commission
1515 S Street, North Building
Suite 500, P.O. Box 510845
Sacramento, California 94245-0621
TEL: (916) 322-2294

COLORADO

SSIG Program:

Colorado Commission on Higher Education
Colorado Heritage Center
1300 Broadway, 2nd Floor
Denver, Colorado 80203
TEL: (303) 866-2723

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80203-1705
TEL: (303) 866-6779

CONNECTICUT

SSIG and Byrd Programs:

Connecticut Department of Higher Education
61 Woodland Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06105-2391
TEL: (203) 566-3910

DELAWARE

SSIG Program:

Delaware Higher Education Commission
Carvel State Office Building, 4th Floor
820 North French Street
Wilmington, Delaware 19801
TEL: (302) 577-3240

Byrd Program:

State Department of Public Instruction
Townsend Building, #279
Federal & Lockerman Streets
Post Office Box 1402
Dover, Delaware 19903-1402
TEL: (302) 739-4583

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

SSIG Program:

Department of Human Services
Office of Postsecondary Education, Research and Assistance
2100 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, S.E., Suite 401
Washington, D.C. 20020
TEL: (202) 727-3688

Byrd Program:

District of Columbia Public Schools
Division of Student Services
4501 Lee Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20019
TEL: (202) 724-4934

FLORIDA

SSIG and Byrd Programs:

Florida Department of Education
Office of Student Financial Assistance
1344 Florida Education Center
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400
TEL: (904) 487-0649

GEORGIA

SSIG Program:

Georgia Student Finance Authority
State Loans & Grants Division
2082 East Exchange Place, Suite 245
Tucker, Georgia 30084
TEL: (404) 414-3000

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
2054 Twin Towers East, 205 Butler Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-5040
TEL: (404) 656-5812

HAWAII

SSIG Program:

Hawaii State Postsecondary Education Commission
2444 Dole Street, Room 202
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822-2394
TEL: (808) 956-8213

Byrd Program:

Hawaii Department of Education
2530 10th Avenue, Room A12
Honolulu, Hawaii 96816
TEL: (808) 733-9103

IDAHO

SSIG Program:

Idaho Board of Education
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, Idaho 83720-0037
TEL: (208) 334-2270

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
650 West State Street
Boise, Idaho 83720
TEL: (208) 334-2113

ILLINOIS

SSIG and Byrd Programs:

Illinois Student Assistance Commission
1755 Lake Cook Road
Deerfield, Illinois 60015-5209
TEL: (708) 948-8500

INDIANA

SSIG Program:

State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana
150 West Market Street, Suite 500
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2811
TEL: (317) 232-2350

Byrd Program:

Indiana Department of Education
State House, Room 229
Center for School Improvement & Performance
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2798
TEL: (317) 232-2305

IOWA

SSIG and Byrd Programs:

Iowa College Student Aid Commission
914 Grand Avenue, Suite 201
Des Moines, Iowa 50309-2824
TEL: 1-800-383-4222

KANSAS

SSIG Program:

Kansas Board of Regents
700 S.W. Harrison, Suite 1410
Topeka, Kansas 66603-3760
TEL: (913) 296-3517

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
Kansas State Education Building
120 East Tenth Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1103
TEL: (913) 296-4876

KENTUCKY

SSIG Program:

Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority
1050 U.S. 127 South, Suite 102
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601-4323
TEL: 1-800-928-8926

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
500 Mero Street
1919 Capital Plaza Tower
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
TEL: (502) 564-3421

LOUISIANA

SSIG Program:

Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission
Office of Student Financial Assistance
P.O. Box 91202
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821-9202
TEL: 1-800-259-5626

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
P.O. Box 94064
626 North 4th Street, 12th Floor
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9064
TEL: (504) 342-2098

MAINE

SSIG and Byrd Programs:

Finance Authority of Maine
P.O. Box 949
Augusta, Maine 04333-0949
TEL: (207) 287-3263

MARYLAND

SSIG Program:

Maryland Higher Education Commission
Jeffrey Building
16 Francis Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1781
TEL: (410) 974-5370

Byrd Program:

Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2595
TEL: (410) 767-0480

MASSACHUSETTS

SSIG Program:

Massachusetts Higher Education Coordinating Council
330 Stuart Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02116
TEL: (617) 727-9420

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
350 Main Street
Malden, Massachusetts 02148-5023
TEL: (617) 388-3300

MICHIGAN

SSIG and Byrd Programs:

Michigan Higher Education Assistance Authority
Office of Scholarships and Grants
P.O. Box 30462
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7962
TEL: (517) 373-3394

MINNESOTA

SSIG Program:

Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board
Capitol Square Building, Suite 400
550 Cedar Street
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-2292
TEL: 1-800-657-3866

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
712 Capitol Square Building
550 Cedar Street
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101
TEL: (612) 282-5088

MISSISSIPPI

SSIG Program:

Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board
3825 Ridgewood Road
Jackson, Mississippi 39211-6453
TEL: (601) 982-6663

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, Mississippi 39205-0771
TEL: (601) 359-3768

MISSOURI

SSIG Program:

Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education
3515 Amazonas Drive
Jefferson City, Missouri 65109-5717
TEL: (314) 751-2361

Byrd Program:

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
P.O. Box 480
205 Jefferson Street, Sixth Floor
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-0480
TEL: (314) 751-2931

MONTANA

SSIG Program:

Montana University System
2500 Broadway
Helena, Montana 59620-3103
TEL: (406) 444-6570

Byrd Program:

State Office of Public Instruction
State Capitol, Room 106
Helena, Montana 59620
TEL: (406) 444-4422

NEBRASKA

SSIG Program:

Coordinating Commission for
Postsecondary Education
P.O. Box 95005
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-5005
TEL: (402) 471-2847

Byrd Program:

Nebraska Department of Education
P.O. Box 94987
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4987
TEL: (402) 471-2784

NEVADA

SSIG and Byrd Programs:

Nevada Department of Education
400 West King Street
Capitol Complex
Carson City, Nevada 89710
TEL: (702) 687-5915

NEW HAMPSHIRE

SSIG Program:

New Hampshire Postsecondary
Education Commission
2 Industrial Park Drive
Concord, New Hampshire 03301-8512
TEL: (603) 271-2555

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
State Office Park South
101 Pleasant Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301
TEL: (603) 271-2632

NEW JERSEY

SSIG Program:

State of New Jersey
Office of Student Financial Assistance
4 Quakerbridge Plaza, CN 540
Trenton, New Jersey 08625
TEL: 1-800-792-8670

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
225 West State Street
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0500
TEL: (609) 984-6409

NEW MEXICO

SSIG Program:

New Mexico Commission on Higher
Education
1068 Cerrillos Road
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501-4295
TEL: (505) 827-7383

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
Education Building
300 Don Gaspar
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501-2786
TEL: (505) 827-6648

NEW YORK

SSIG Program:

New York State Higher Education
Services Corporation
One Commerce Plaza
Albany, New York 12255
TEL: (518) 474-5642

Byrd Program:

State Education Department
111 Education Building
Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12234
TEL: (518) 474-5705

NORTH CAROLINA

SSIG Program:

North Carolina State Education
Assistance Authority
P.O. Box 2688
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27515-2688
TEL: (919) 821-4771

Byrd Program:

State Department of Public Instruction
Education Building
Division of Teacher Education
116 West Edenton Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27603-1712
TEL: (919) 733-0701

NORTH DAKOTA

SSIG Program:

North Dakota University System
North Dakota Student Financial
Assistance Program
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0230
TEL: (701) 224-4114

Byrd Program:

State Department of Public Instruction
State Capitol Building, 11th Floor
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0164
TEL: (701) 224-2271

OHIO

SSIG Program:

Ohio Student Aid Commission
309 South Fourth Street
P.O. Box 182452
Columbus, Ohio 43218-2452
TEL: 1-800-837-6752

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
65 South Front Street, Room 1005
Columbus, Ohio 43266-0308
TEL: (614) 466-2761

OKLAHOMA

SSIG Program:

Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education
Oklahoma Tuition Aid Grant Program
P.O. Box 3020
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73101-3020
TEL: (405) 524-9100

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
Oliver Hodge Memorial Education Building
2500 North Lincoln Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4599
TEL: (405) 521-4122

OREGON

SSIG Program:

Oregon State Scholarship Commission
1500 Valley River Drive, Suite 100
Eugene, Oregon 97401
TEL: (503) 687-7400

Byrd Program:

Oregon Department of Education
700 Pringle Parkway, S.E.
Salem, Oregon 97310-0290
TEL: (503) 378-5585

PENNSYLVANIA

SSIG Program :

Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency
1200 North Seventh Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17102-1444
TEL: 1-800-692-7435

Byrd Program:

Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency
P. O. Box 8114
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105-8114
TEL: (717) 720-2075

RHODE ISLAND

SSIG Program:

Rhode Island Higher Education Assistance Authority
560 Jefferson Boulevard
Warwick, Rhode Island 02886
TEL: 1-800-922-9855

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
22 Hayes Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02908
TEL: (401) 277-3126

SOUTH CAROLINA

SSIG Program:

South Carolina Higher Education
Tuition Grants Commission
1310 Lady Street, Suite 811
P.O. Box 12159
Columbia, South Carolina 29201
TEL: (803) 734-1200

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
803-a Rutledge Building
1429 Senate Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201
TEL: (803) 734-8364

SOUTH DAKOTA

SSIG and Byrd Programs:

Department of Education and Cultural
Affairs
Office of the Secretary
700 Governors Drive
Pierre, South Dakota 57501-2291
TEL: (605) 773-3134

TENNESSEE

SSIG Program:

Tennessee Student Assistance
Corporation
Suite 1950, Parkway Towers
404 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0820
TEL: (615) 741-1346

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
100 Cordell Hull Building
Nashville, Tennessee 37219-5335
TEL: (615) 741-1346 or 1-800-342-
1663 (TN residents only)

TEXAS

SSIG and Byrd Programs:

Texas Higher Education Coordinating
Board
P.O. Box 12788
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711
TEL: 1-800-242-3062

UTAH

SSIG Program:

Utah State Board of Regents
Utah System of Higher Education
355 West North Temple
#3 Triad Center, Suite 550
Salt Lake City, Utah 84180-1205
TEL: (801) 321-7205

Byrd Program:

Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111
TEL: (801) 538-7779

VERMONT

SSIG and Byrd Programs:

Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
Champlain Mill, P.O. Box 2000
Winooski, Vermont 05404-2601
TEL: 1-800-642-3177

VIRGINIA

SSIG Program:

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia
James Monroe Building
101 North Fourteenth Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
TEL: (804) 786-1690

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
P.O. Box 2120
James Monroe Building
14th and Franklin Streets
Richmond, Virginia 23216-2120
TEL: (804) 225-2072

WASHINGTON

SSIG Program:

Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board
917 Lakeridge Way, S.W.
P.O. Box 43430
Olympia, Washington 98504-3430
TEL: (360) 753-7850

Byrd Program:

State Department of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building, P.O. Box FG11
Olympia, Washington 98504-3211
TEL: (206) 753-2858

WEST VIRGINIA

SSIG Program:

Central Office, State College and University Systems of West Virginia
P.O. Box 4007
Charleston, West Virginia 25364-4007
TEL: (304) 558-4016

Byrd Program:

State Department of Education
1900 Washington Street
Building B, Room 358
Charleston, West Virginia 25305
TEL: (304) 588-2691

WISCONSIN

SSIG Program:

Higher Educational Aids Board
P.O. Box 7885
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7885
TEL: (608) 267-2206

Byrd Program:

State Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster Street
P.O. Box 7841
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7841
TEL: (608) 266-2364

WYOMING

SSIG Program:

Wyoming Community College Commission
2020 Carey Avenue, 8th Floor
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002
TEL: (307) 777-7763

Byrd Program:

Wyoming State Department of Education
Hathaway Building
2300 Capitol Avenue, 2nd Floor
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002-0050
TEL: (307) 777-6265

AMERICAN SAMOA

SSIG Program:

American Samoa Community College
Board of Higher Education
P.O. Box 2609
Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799-2609
TEL: (684) 699-9155

Byrd Program:

American Samoa Government
Department of Education
P.O. Box DOE
Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799
TEL: (684) 633-5237

GUAM

SSIG and Byrd Program:

University of Guam
303 University Drive
Mangilao, Guam 96923
TEL: (671) 734-4469

NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

SSIG Program:

Northern Marianas College
P.O. Box 1250
Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands 96950
TEL: (670) 234-6128

Byrd Program:

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
State Board of Public Education
Public School System
P.O. Box 1370, CK
Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands 96950
TEL: (670) 322-6402

PUERTO RICO

SSIG Program:

Council on Higher Education
UPR Station, Box 23305
Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico 00931
TEL: (809) 758-3350

Byrd Program:

Department of Education
P.O. Box 759
Hato Rey, Puerto Rico 00919
TEL: (809) 753-2200

VIRGIN ISLANDS

SSIG Program:

Virgin Islands Joint Boards of Education
Charlotte Amalie, P.O. Box 11900
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00801
TEL: (809) 774-4546

Byrd Program:

Virgin Islands Department of Education
Office of Federal Programs
No. 44-46 Kongens Gade, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00802
TEL: (809) 774-0100

Byrd Program Representatives for Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau

Federated States of Micronesia

Federated States of Micronesia
1725 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
TEL: (202) 223-4383

Republic of the Marshall Islands

RMI Scholarship Grant and Loan Board
P.O. Box 1436
3 Lagoon Road
Majuro, Marshall Islands 96960
TEL: (692) 625-3108

Republic of Palau

Ministry of Education Bureau
P.O. Box 9
Koror, Republic of Palau, TT 96940
TEL: (680) 488-1003

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

SSIG Program:

Office of Postsecondary Education
Student Financial Assistance Programs
Pell and State Grant Section
U.S. Department of Education
ROB-3, Room 3045
600 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-5447
TEL: (202) 708-4607

Byrd Program:

Division of Higher Education Incentive Programs
Higher Education Programs
Office of Postsecondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
1280 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Suite C80
Washington, D.C. 20024

Glossary

Academic Year — This is a measure of academic work to be accomplished by a student. A school defines its own academic year, but federal regulations set minimum standards to determine federal financial aid awards. For instance, the academic year must be at least 30 weeks of instructional time in which a full-time student is expected to complete at least 24 semester or trimester credit hours, 36 quarter credit hours, or 900 clock hours.

Award Year — An award year begins on July 1 of one year and extends to June 30 of the next year. Funding for Federal Pell Grants and campus-based programs is provided on the basis of the award year—for example, a student is paid out of funds designated for a particular award year, such as the 1996-97 award year.

Base Year — For need analysis purposes, the base year is the calendar year preceding the award year. For instance, 1995 is the base year used for the 1996-97 award year. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) uses family income from the base year because it is more accurate and easier to verify than projected year income.

Campus-Based Programs — Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), Federal Perkins Loan, and Federal Work-Study (FWS) programs. These three programs are called "campus-based" because the funds are allocated to and administered directly by a school's financial aid office, which awards the funds to students using federal guidelines.

Central Processing System (CPS) — The Department's processing facility for application data. The CPS receives student information from the application processors, calculates a student's official EFC, performs several eligibility database matches, prints the Student Aid Report (SAR), and produces Institutional Student Information Records (ISIRs).

Citizen/Eligible Noncitizen — A student must be one of the following to receive federal student aid:

- U.S. citizen
- U.S. national (includes natives of American Samoa or Swain's Island)
- U.S. permanent resident who has an I-151, I-551, or I-551C (Alien Registration Receipt Card)

If a student is not in one of these categories, he or she must have an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) showing one of the following designations:

- "Refugee"
- "Asylum Granted"
- "Indefinite Parole and/or Humanitarian Parole"

- "Cuban-Haitian Entrant, Status Pending"
- "Conditional Entrant" (valid only if issued before April 1, 1980)
- Other eligible noncitizen with a Temporary Resident Card (I-688)

Or a student can be eligible on the basis of the Family Unity Status category with an approved I-797 (Voluntary Departure and Immigrant Petition).

If a student has only a Notice of Approval to Apply for Permanent Residence (I-171 or I-464), he or she is not eligible for federal student aid.

If a student is in the U.S. on an F1 or F2 student visa, or on a J1 or J2 exchange-visitor visa only, he or she can't get federal student aid. Also, persons with G series visas (pertaining to international organizations) are not eligible for federal student aid.

Citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau are eligible for Federal Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, or Federal Work-Study only. These applicants should check with their schools' financial aid administrators for more information.

Consolidation Loan/Direct Consolidation Loan — There are two categories of consolidation loans—Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program Consolidation Loans and Direct Consolidation Loans. Both allow the borrower to combine different types and amounts of federal student loans to simplify repayment. A consolidation loan pays off the existing loans; the borrower then repays the consolidation loan.

Cost of Attendance (COA) — A student's cost of attendance includes tuition and fees, room and board expenses while attending school, and allowances for books and supplies, transportation, loan fees (if applicable), dependent care costs, costs related to a disability, and other miscellaneous expenses. In addition, reasonable costs for a study-abroad program and costs associated with a student's employment as part of a cooperative education program may be included. The cost of attendance is estimated by the school, within guidelines established by federal regulations. The cost of attendance is compared to a student's Expected Family Contribution (EFC) to determine the student's need for aid.

Default — Failure to repay a loan in accordance with the terms of the promissory note. Default can also occur if students fail to submit requests for deferments or discharges (cancellations) in a timely manner.

Default Rate — A percentage calculated each year for a postsecondary school on the basis of the number of former students who defaulted on FFEL Program Loans received at that school.

Department (or ED) — Abbreviated names for the U.S. Department of Education.

Eligible Program — A course of study that requires a certain minimum number of hours of instruction and that leads to a degree or

certificate at a school participating in one or more of the federal student financial aid programs described in this handbook. Generally, to get student aid, a student must be enrolled in an eligible program.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC) — The amount, determined by a formula Congress established, that a student's family is expected to contribute toward the cost of attendance. It is determined for the purposes of the federal SFA programs. The EFC is printed on the front of a Student Aid Report (SAR) or on an Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR).

William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program — Federal Direct Stafford/Ford Loans (Direct Subsidized Loans), Federal Direct Unsubsidized Stafford/Ford Loans (Direct Unsubsidized Loans), Federal Direct PLUS Loans, and Federal Direct Consolidation Loans. Funds for these programs are lent to student and parent borrowers from the federal government through colleges and career schools that participate in the program. The program began operating on July 1, 1994.

Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program — The Federal Stafford (subsidized and unsubsidized), Federal PLUS, and Federal Consolidation loan programs. Funds for these programs are provided by private lenders, and the loans are guaranteed by the federal government.

Financial Need — The difference between a student's cost of attendance (COA) and the Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Renewal FAFSA — The application filled out and filed by a student that collects household and financial information used by the federal government to calculate the Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) — A federal output record that contains the student's EFC as calculated by the central processing system (CPS) and all the financial and other data submitted by the student on the FAFSA. The ISIR can be received electronically by schools that participate in the Electronic Data Exchange (EDE) system. (See Student Aid Report.)

Need Analysis — The process of analyzing household and financial information on a student's financial aid application and calculating an Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

Overaward — Generally, any amount of federal financial aid that exceeds the student's financial need. (The overaward concept does not apply in the Federal Pell Grant Program.)

Overpayment — Any payment of a Federal Pell Grant, FSEOG, or SSIG that exceeds the amount for which a student was eligible. An overpayment may be the result of an overaward, an error in cost of attendance or Expected Family Contribution (EFC), or a student not meeting any other eligibility criterion, such as citizenship or enrollment in an eligible program.

Promissory Note — A binding legal document that a borrower signs to get a loan. By signing this note, a borrower promises to repay the

loan, with interest, in specified installments. The promissory note will also include any information about the grace period, deferment, or cancellation provisions, and a borrower's rights and responsibilities with respect to that loan.

Renewal FAFSA — The version of the FAFSA that students may use if they applied for federal financial aid the previous award year. If a student is among those allowed to complete a Renewal FAFSA, it will be sent directly to him or her by the FAFSA processor or the school.

Resources — Other student aid that must be taken into account to prevent an overaward in the campus-based programs, as defined in federal regulations for the campus-based programs. Resources are called other "estimated financial assistance" in determining a student's eligibility for some federal student loans.

School — A postsecondary educational institution, such as a college, university, or career school. In this handbook, the term "school" refers to such an institution.

Simplified Needs Test — The primary purpose of the Simplified Needs Test is to make it easier for some students to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). If a dependent student's parents' income is less than $50,000 and the relevant family members were non-tax filers or were eligible to use a 1040A or a 1040EZ to file their taxes, the student completes only the first part of the application; the asset information will not have to be provided.

Student Aid Report (SAR) — A federal output document sent to a student by the application processor. The SAR contains financial and other information reported by the student on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). That information is entered into the processing system, and the SAR is produced. The student's eligibility for aid is indicated by the EFC, which is printed on the front of the SAR. (See Institutional Student Information Record.)

SFA Programs — The programs administered by the office of Student Financial Assistance Programs within the U.S. Department of Education: Federal Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal Work-Study, Federal Perkins Loans, Federal Direct Stafford/Ford Loans, Federal Direct PLUS Loans, Federal Stafford Loans, Federal PLUS Loans, and State Student Incentive Grants.

Verification — A procedure where a school checks the information a student reported on the FAFSA, usually by requesting a copy of signed tax returns filed by the student and, if applicable, the student's parent(s) and spouse. Schools must verify students selected for verification by the federal central processing system, following procedures established by federal regulations. The contractor prints an asterisk next to the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) on SARs to identify students selected for verification. Many schools also select students for verification in addition to those selected by the central processing system.

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